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ABSTRACT

This instructor's guide is one of the five books developed during a 21-month cooperative project to develop instructional materials that enhance skills in a workplace context. Partners in the project included the University of Texas at Austin, consultants, the Austin/Travis County Private Industry Council, Hart Graphics, IBM, and Texas Instruments. The guide contains three modules that cover the following topics for a suggested 22-week course: accessing information through reading; decision making, problem solving, and team building; and oral and written communication. The modules are divided into a total of 25 lessons that use a functional workplace context, discovered through observing how workers use skills, conducting job task analyses, and interviewing workers, supervisors, and training managers. Lessons in this instructor's guide contain some or all the following elements of a lesson plan: learning objective; introduction; vocabulary; practice problems; developing understanding; skill building problems, activities, and exercises; self-check; suggestions for further activities, discussion, or practice; suggested lesson supplements from those at the back of the module; answer keys; and notes to the instructor (preceding each lesson). (KC)

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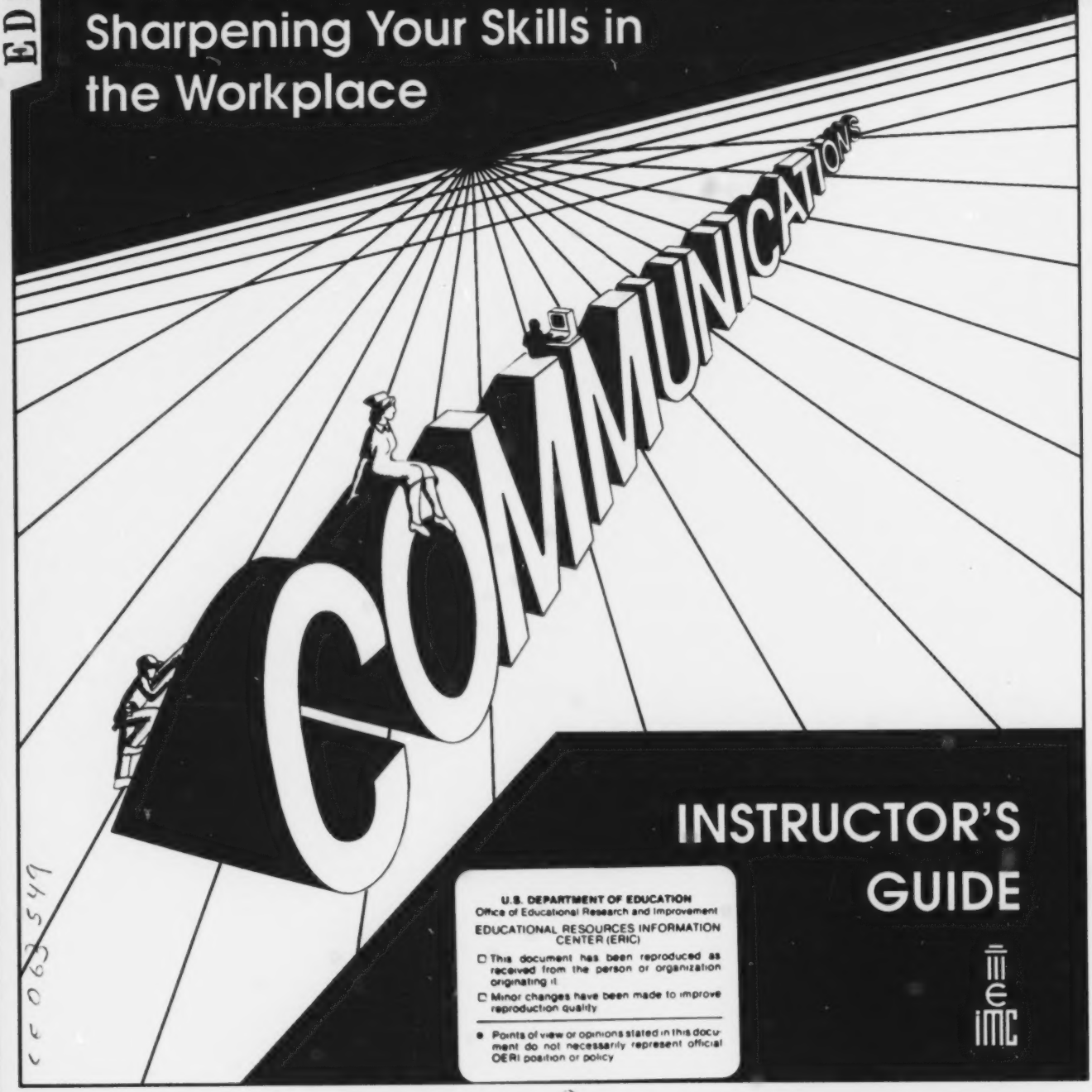
THE Competitive Edge

Sharpening Your Skills in the Workplace



INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

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The Competitive Edge: Sharpening Your Skills in the Workplace

COMMUNICATIONS

Instructor's Guide

By

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Published by

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The Inside Scoop

Employers want employees who can keep up with changing technology and an ever-changing work environment. Employees want to obtain and maintain the necessary skills that make them valuable to the company. Workplace education strengthens a range of skills that are valuable in the daily business lives of employers and employees. The goal of these lessons is to enhance the intermediate-level skills of workers to those of functional competence.

Overview of Books

The Competitive Edge: Sharpening Your Skills in the Workplace consists of five books:

- Math, Student Edition
- Math, Instructor's Guide
- Communications, Student Edition
- Communications, Instructor's Guide
- Administrator's Guide

The *Math* and *Communications* books are separated into modules. The suggested time guidelines are approximately 19 weeks for *Math* and 22 weeks for *Communications*. By module, it would be as follows:

Mathematics
Module 1: Refresher Math (Part 1) = 6 weeks
Module 2: Refresher Math (Part 2) = 13 weeks

Communications
Module 1: Accessing Information Through Reading = 10 weeks
Module 2: Decision Making, Problem Solving, and Team Building = 5 weeks
Module 3: Oral and Written Communication = 7 weeks

The actual teaching time for each module depends upon students' characteristics, readiness, and speed of mastery as well as company requirements. The two math modules can be taught in sequence, or you can alternate between a math module and a communications module. Most lessons take about 2 hours to cover, but some may take more or less time.

Lesson Design

The lessons were designed using a **functional workplace context** by observing how workers actually use skills. This process included conducting job task analyses and interviewing workers, supervisors, and training managers.

This curriculum provides instruction in the specific skills that employees use in the workplace. The lessons in each module build on one another and are designed to be taught together as a unit. Each lesson includes several sections. Icons signal the beginning of each section. Not all lessons will include every section. The icons used in the lessons and in the memos to the instructor are as follows:

Learning Objective

The learning objective is given at the beginning of each lesson. For example: "To develop tools for sending clear verbal messages."

Introduction

The introduction restates the objective and often mentions its relevance to the workplace. For example:

"When work teams solve problems, they are seeking new, more effective results. Something about the old way is not working. Team members need to think creatively to find new solutions. This lesson will focus on attitudes and tools that can help you respond creatively to solving problems."

Vocabulary

The vocabulary section defines terms that may need explanation. For example:

"*scanning*—using key words or numbers to look quickly through a reading passage for specific information."

Now Try This

A few practice problems are presented at certain progressive stages in the development of the lesson. The learners can practice their understanding of the concepts at each stage. For example:

"Round off 9.212 to the nearest whole number."

Develop Your Understanding

This section contains the concepts and skills being taught. Explanations and examples are found in this section.

Skill Builders

Math problems, activities, and other exercises for learner practice are located in this section.

Check Yourself

This section, at the end of the lesson, can include a variety of math problems, activities, or exercises for extra practice.

Lesson Break

This is a signal to the instructor that this lesson contains many concepts. The broken pencil suggests to the instructor that this may be a good place to "break" and check for mastery.

Closure

Suggestions for further activities, discussion, or practice are located in this section.

Tools of the Trade

This is a signal that you can find lesson supplements at the back of the module. Lesson supplements include practical reviews on topics like language mechanics, dictionary usage, and spelling tips. They are located after Modules 1 and 3 in the *Communications* book only.

Answer keys are provided at the back of the student editions and within the lessons of the instructor's guides. Some of the questions in the *Communications* book are open-ended and do not have one correct answer. Use your discretion when judging the correctness of answers to those questions.

The *Math* instructor's guide includes pretests and posttests for both modules, with answers at the back. Module 2 in the *Math* book has three Reviews.

The pages in the instructor's guides are numbered to exactly correspond to the numbering of the student editions.

There is a "Memo" to the instructor preceding each lesson that will alert you to special problems, suggestions, or explanations.

Suggestions to the Instructor

Many of the examples used in the lessons are from the manufacturing and/or high-tech world of work. These examples can easily be adapted to incorporate situations that are applicable to other company-specific contexts. By all means, use actual company memos, reports, newsletters, charts, etc., to make the examples and activities even more directly relevant to your learners.

You may choose to omit some lessons and extend others depending on class and company needs. Present the material in stages that are logical and easy to follow.

Review both the student lesson and the "Memo" to the instructor before each session. Prepare materials or examples that make the lesson content applicable to the workplace. By using material specific to that business, the lessons can be adapted to almost any work environment. To reinforce past learning, review the previous lesson at the beginning of each new session.

Ask learners to comment on how they might use each skill in previous, current, or future jobs. Encourage them to seek opportunities to apply skills on the job.

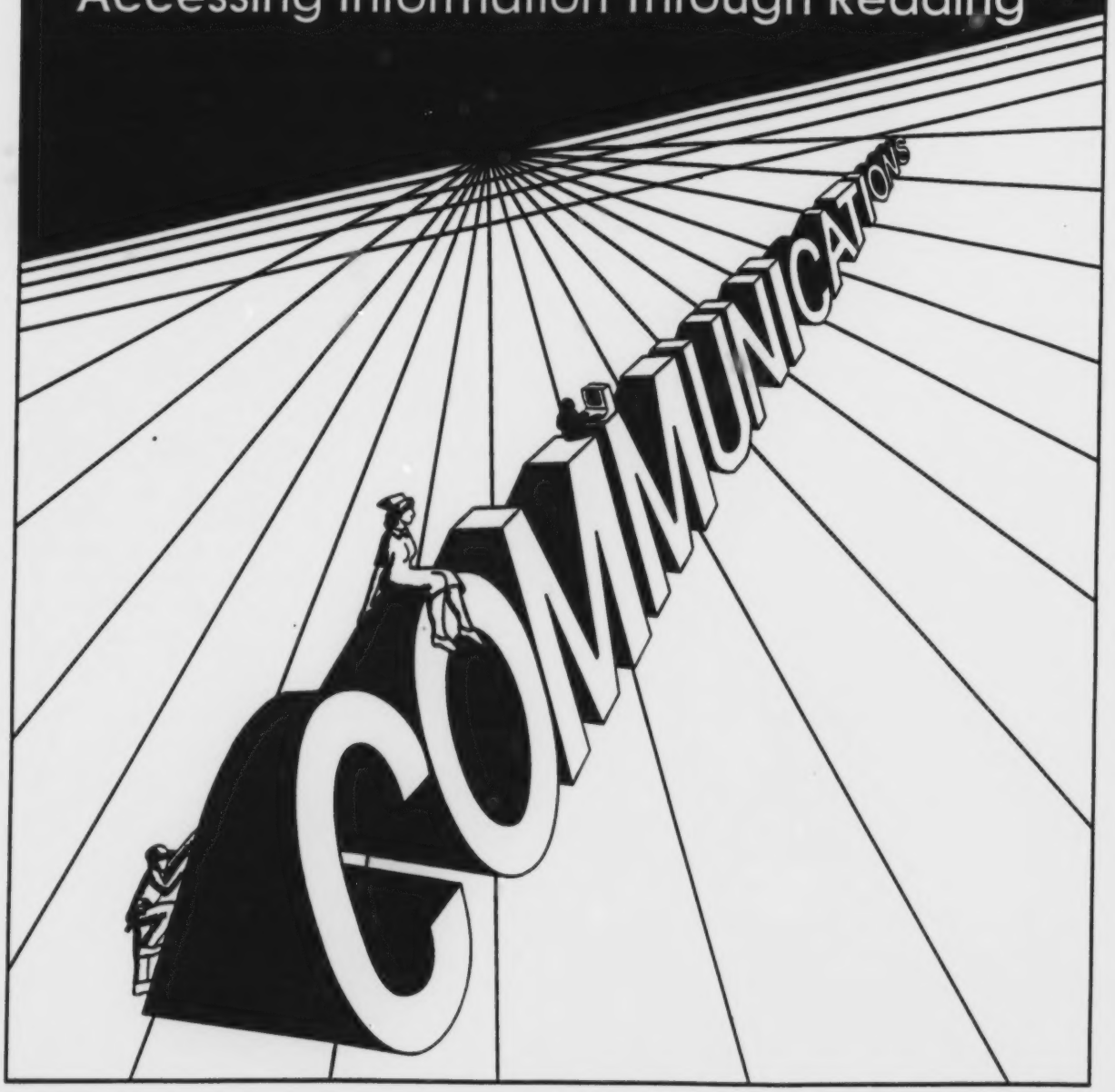
Encourage learner involvement by developing a nonthreatening environment. Vary the structure of the class with individual and group exercises, games, and applications.

Conclusion

By sharpening these workplace skills, each employee-learner has an opportunity to increase his/her value to the company. And each employer, in turn, has an increased opportunity to maintain and, in some cases reclaim, its competitive edge in our global economy. You are playing a key role in facilitating such positive growth on both an individual and a global level.

Module 1

Accessing Information Through Reading



MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Reading Strategies: Lesson 1.1

This lesson focuses on identifying the purposes for which materials were written, predicting their content, and identifying topics and main ideas. Provide appropriate company-specific materials to use for practicing the skills taught in this module, such as company handbooks, procedural directions, manuals, memos, and reports. Be sure to have plenty of materials on hand for practices recommended in the Skill Builders and Check Yourself sections. Additional practice in each lesson using company materials may be useful. Review each lesson carefully, allowing time for material preparation (if needed) before class.

Develop Your Understanding

The Writer's Purpose

Along with identifying the writer's purpose, learners should discuss their own purposes for reading different texts and how they might approach a passage depending on their purpose for reading it.

Using Clues to Predict Content

For practice, take learners through the list of questions used to evaluate documents. Model the application of these questions to the Credit Union memo through a guided discussion.

Finding the Main Idea

Reinforce the difference between the main idea and the topic. Discuss how to find and identify them. You may wish to walk learners through Skill Builders 3.

Check Yourself

Use several different types of reading materials found in the workplace for this section.

Lesson 1.1
Reading Strategies

Learning Objectives

To identify the purpose of printed materials
To predict the content of printed materials using available clues
To identify topics and main ideas

In today's workplace, we are often bombarded with printed information. Memos, reports, manuals, procedures, newsletters, posters, electronic mail, and other forms of written communication may reach you in a single day. You may not have time to carefully sift through all of the materials you receive. This lesson contains strategies that will help you decide which of the materials you receive are most important to read, and to grasp the main point of printed materials quickly.

Quick Survey:

Which of the following printed materials do you see or receive at work? Which ones do you take time to read thoroughly?

	I see or receive this type of material	I read some of these	I read all of these
Memos	Yes/No	_____	_____
Manuals	Yes/No	_____	_____
Instructions	Yes/No	_____	_____
Reports	Yes/No	_____	_____
Notices	Yes/No	_____	_____
Electronic Mail	Yes/No	_____	_____
Company Newsletter	Yes/No	_____	_____
Benefits Information	Yes/No	_____	_____
Safety Information	Yes/No	_____	_____
Other Printed Material:		_____	_____

Vocabulary

italic—a typeface with letters bearing to the right: *italic*
boldface—a dark, thick typeface, used to show emphasis: **boldface**
key words—words that are central to understanding the meaning of a piece of writing
topic—the subject of a piece of writing; in general, what the piece is about
main idea—the most important message in a paragraph or piece of writing; it expresses something about the topic

Develop Your Understanding

The Writer's Purpose

Whenever you read anything at work, keep the purpose of the information in mind. Why was this material written? Is it a memo informing you of a change in company policy, or a list of procedures to be carefully followed on the job? Did the writer intend to tell you something you need to know to perform your job, or just to tell you something that might be interesting? Should you save the information or throw it away? Having these questions in your mind should help you deal with the information more efficiently.

Compare the following documents:

Document A

October 3, 1992
MEMORANDUM

TO: All Employees
FROM: Main Office
SUBJECT: Charity Drive Procedures

The 1992 Charity Drive begins next week. You may choose to contribute to a particular charity or make a contribution to the company's General Charity Fund. Employees wishing to contribute by check or payroll deduction should contact the charity drive organizer at 444-2221. Please *do not call the Main Office!* Thank you for your cooperation.

Document B

1992 CHARITY DRIVE WEEK
OCTOBER 7 - 11, 1992

It's time for Charity Drive Week again! Last year, you and your co-workers raised the generous sum of $25,342 to give to local charities. This year, due to big cuts in public assistance programs, your help is needed more than ever before to help folks in our community. Our goal for this year is $27,876, a 10% improvement over last year's total.

A list of charities we contribute to will be posted on all company bulletin boards. Payment can be made by check or payroll deduction. So come on and give a helping hand to your neighbors! Now *that's* something to feel good about.

Although both Document A and Document B discuss the 1992 Charity Drive, their purposes are not the same.

Document A *lets you know what to do* if you want to contribute to the drive.

Document B *encourages you to contribute* to the drive.

If you want to contribute to the charity drive, you may want to save Document A, since it contains information you may need. Document B is more lively and interesting, but you probably don't need to save it after reading it once.

Skill Builders 1

Below are four brief excerpts from longer pieces of writing. What do you think is the writer's purpose in each excerpt? Would you save this piece of information? Why or why not?

a *Caution:* Harmful if swallowed. If substance comes in contact with eyes, flush with water and contact physician immediately.

The writer's purpose ***is to let you know what to do if you come in contact with this substance.***

Would you save? Why? ***Yes, because you need to know what to do if you come in contact with this substance.***

b. Although the manufacturing seminar I attended was interesting and informative, paying for airfare, lodging, and fees for 50 employees was not cost-effective. We should either find another class that is available locally or hire a trainer to come here for a week.

The writer's purpose ***is to encourage the company to change to a more cost-effective training procedure.***

Would you save? Why? ***It can probably be discarded after it is read, unless reports are kept for future reference.***

c. 1. Pour the copper sulfate ($CuSO_4$) solution into a clean glass container.
2. Cut two pieces of copper wire 8 inches long.
3. Cut two pieces of copper wire 12 inches long.

The writer's purpose ***is to explain the steps in a process.***

Would you save? Why? ***Yes, because it needs to be kept in the work area for reference.***

d. Cafeteria hours have now been extended to include breakfast. A wide variety of breakfast items will be available between 6 A.M. and 8 A.M. This program is experimental and may be discontinued if there is not enough interest.

The writer's purpose ***is to inform employees of an experimental cafeteria plan.***

Would you save? Why? ***Once the information is digested, it can be discarded.***

Using Clues to Predict Content

Time is important when you are at work, and reading materials thoroughly can take a great deal of time. You may need to make quick decisions about which materials must be read carefully, which may be skimmed, and which may be thrown away without reading much at all. Titles, headlines, words in boldface or italics, "subject" headings on memos, and other clues may be used to make quick decisions about the importance of written information. It may help to ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is this material dated or "time-sensitive"? Is it current information?
2. Is it directed at me or at my job?
3. Is it about something that will affect me or my job?
4. Is it general information that may be interesting?
5. Is it about something that doesn't concern me?
6. Is it something I should save and read when I have more time?
7. Is it something that may be useful in the future, even if it's not useful now?
8. Do I know why this material was sent to me? Is it safe to assume I don't need it?

In order to answer these questions, it is helpful to look for *key words*. These are words that carry the most important meaning in the document. Below is a memo with only a few phrases showing:

Memorandum

To: **Credit Union Members**
From: **Your Company Credit Union**

Special for our members only!
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New Car Loans at 9.5% and up!
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Used Car Loans at 10.5% and up!
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You Must Buy Before September 30!

The clues given tell you that this is a memo for credit union members who want to buy a new or used car with a low-interest loan before September 30.

It is probably safe to discard this memo without reading further if:

- You are not a member of the company credit union and don't plan to join.
- You are a member of the credit union but don't want to buy a car.
- It is already after September 30.

Skill Builders 2

a. Suppose you were looking through your company newsletter and came across the following headline:

"If You're Wired, You're Fired!"

Use this headline to predict what the article will be about.

The article will be about ***Any reasonable answer is acceptable (drugs, headphones, etc.).***

Do you think it would be important to read this article? ***Answers will vary.***

b. Next, read the article:

> We have received many questions about ABC Computer's policy of firing anyone found using illegal drugs on the job. Did you know that, aside from breaking the law, illegal drug users tend to have more health problems than workers who don't use drugs? An employee "under the influence" may have physical or mental problems or sudden mood swings. This often causes the person to miss work. Also, it can be dangerous to the employee and others to have such a person on the job.
>
> Another reason a long-time drug user should not be on the job is the effects of withdrawal once the person decides to stop using the drug. Withdrawal is a series of changes a person's body goes through when the person quits taking a drug. Withdrawal symptoms can include headaches, hot flashes, sweating, stomach cramps, and diarrhea. These problems can cause the person to miss more work.
>
> The bottom line is, one of the problems with drug abuse is that you can't expect to use illegal drugs and perform your job at the same time. Thanks for staying drug-free!

1. What was the writer's purpose?

   The purpose is to inform the reader about the reasons ABC Computer fires anyone found using illegal drugs on the job.

2. Does the headline match the content of the article? If not, write a headline that matches the article better:

Yes, it does. Learners may choose to rewrite the title.

Finding the Main Idea

Most of the written materials you read at work or elsewhere have a *main idea* to communicate along with supporting details. A main idea is different from a *topic*. The topic is simply the subject of the material, but the main idea tells you something about the subject. For example, in the article entitled, "If You're Wired, You're Fired!", the company's drug abuse policy is the *topic*. The *main idea* is that drug abuse is not only illegal, but also interferes with the abuser's ability to do his job. If the material is a report, each paragraph of the report will have its own main idea, as will the report as a whole. The title of a report will usually give a clue to the main idea, but you must look further to understand that idea fully.

Suppose you want to find the main idea of the following passage:

Industrial Electronics

Did you know that you do not have to wait, in most cases, until you get out of high school to receive training in electronics? Many high schools now offer their own 2-year programs in industrial electronics.

In these classes, students learn the fundamentals of direct and alternating current, physics of electricity, circuit analysis, Ohm's law, troubleshooting electrical circuits, etc. They spend 2 hours a day in class, and they must be fairly good math students.

But what other courses prepare students for electronics in high school? Basic earth and life sciences help, as well as beginning physics and chemistry. Biology is useful, also, because of the many uses of electronics to improve the quality of life. The student who does reasonably well in these courses will be a good prospect for a career in electronics.

Industrial electronics courses in high school provide excellent preparation for technical training beyond high school. A good background in science can help a student succeed in both of these areas.

If the passage is well written, the main idea should be stated somewhere within it. *Usually*, but not always, the main idea will be given either in the first or last paragraph of the passage.

You can also *usually* find the main idea in each paragraph in the first or last sentence of the paragraph. The sentence that states the main idea of the paragraph is called the *topic sentence* of the paragraph.

Skill Builders 3

Use the passage called "Industrial Electronics" to answer these questions.

a. What is the **topic** of the passage? ***Preparation for electronic careers at the high school level***

b. State the **main idea** of the passage: ***One example: A strong background in science, along with one of the new high school programs in electronics, is good preparation for a career in the electronics field.***

c. What is the writer's **purpose**? ***To recommend a course of study to high school students interested in careers in electronics***

Skill Builders 4

Use the passage on the next page to answer the following questions:

1. What is the writer's **purpose**?

   To make industrial workers aware of chemical hazards and proper safety procedures when working with chemicals

2. What is the **topic** of the passage?

   Chemical hazards and safety procedures

3. What is the **main idea** of the passage?

   The first sentence in the passage contains the main idea. (According to federal and state laws, everyone working in a chemical area should understand the hazards of the chemicals they are working with and the precautions necessary to work safely with them.)

4. Choose a **title** for the passage that reflects the main idea.

Your Title: ***"Chemical Safety" is one possibility.***

According to federal and state laws, everyone working in a chemical area should understand the hazards of the chemicals they are working with and the precautions necessary to work safely with them. Your employer must inform you of those hazardous chemicals found in your work area, make available in the work area a form called a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) or equivalent which explains the properties and hazards of each chemical in the work area, and provide instructions on the use and precautions necessary for working with the chemical. Your manager will provide you with more details.

Any chemical can be harmful if not used properly. Knowledge of the chemical and its hazards will develop confidence and reduce the fear of working with it. Chemical manufacturers and your employer place warning instructions on the labels of chemical containers. By following these instructions, you will help to maintain a safe chemical work environment.

When adding one chemical to another, never overlook the possibility of a hazardous reaction. Important considerations are the rate of reaction, catalytic effect of container materials, heat transfer capacity of the equipment, stability of the products and possible by-products, and toxicity, flammability, and volume of the off-gases.

During chemical storage, hazardous mixtures may be formed by accidental mixing due to damaged or broken containers. Make sure incompatible chemicals are not stored together.

Waste disposal in the facility can also cause hazardous mixtures. Know the products you are disposing of, and make sure they will not react with the contents of the waste container.

Check Yourself

Select several examples of written information that you use or have seen at work. For each example, answer the following questions:

1. What was the writer's purpose?

2. What clues help you predict the contents of the document?

3. What is the general topic of the document?

4. What is the main idea of the document or of some part of the document?

5. Would you save or discard this information? Why?

MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Locating Information Quickly: Lesson 1.2

This lesson focuses on understanding the difference between skimming and scanning.

You may wish to provide several types of reading materials for learners to use with this lesson. We suggest you provide some type of company handbook or manual, along with a company newspaper or newsletter, and other types of company literature.

Begin with a discussion of what learners typically do when they need to find information quickly or what they do when they need just a piece of information and not everything contained in some written material.

Discuss the importance of identifying the purpose of reading and the fact that the purpose itself will determine the best technique to use in reading something.

Develop Your Understanding

You may want to read along with the learners in this section, or you may want to use the student text as a discussion guide as you introduce and practice each skill. Be sure to have any additional reading materials ready.

Reading Rate and Skimming for a General Idea

You should first discuss the need for predetermining reading rate based upon the reasons for reading and the type of material being read. Then move into a discussion of skimming—what it is, when you do it, and how. Point out that, depending upon your purpose for skimming, you can skim in different ways.

Skimming for More Content Information

Point out the additional clues that learners should focus on when determining content. For additional practice in skimming, you may wish to provide a company handbook or manual for learners to use.

Key Words

Explain to learners what key words are and how to identify them. You may need to spend some time discussing how to choose what key words learners should use when looking for information.

Scanning

The main purpose of scanning is to locate a specific piece of information using key words. Learners must be able to identify possible key words. They should then practice the skill of scanning materials looking just for these key words.

You may wish to provide several different additional readings for this section. Before class, decide upon specific questions to be answered from each reading. Learners will practice scanning to locate the information.

After completing all Skill Builders, you may wish to provide further practice using company-specific reading materials. These should be prepared ahead of time with appropriate questions and answers to illustrate the skill being practiced.

Tools of the Trade

The lesson supplements entitled "Using the Dictionary," "Table of Contents," and "The Index" complement this lesson. Go over the concepts and skills presented, then let learners complete the exercises and check their answers.

Lesson 1.2
Locating Information Quickly

Learning Objectives

To understand the difference between skimming and scanning
To practice skimming and scanning different types of materials

When you are reading materials, always adjust your reading speed and technique according to the type of material you are reading and your reason for reading it. Define the purpose of reading, and then choose the best reading technique to use. It is important to understand when to use the skills of skimming and scanning and to practice using them. There are many occasions at work when these skills can save you time and effort.

Vocabulary

skimming—quickly looking at parts of a reading passage to get a general idea of what it is about
scanning—using key words or numbers to look quickly through a reading passage for specific information
key words—words that are important to the central idea of a passage or relate directly to specific information sought by the reader

Develop Your Understanding

Reading Rate

Most people do not always read at the same speed. When reading materials for entertainment, you probably read rather quickly, getting the idea by reading key groups of words, but not necessarily every word. At other times,

perhaps when reading difficult materials such as instructions or chemical safety manuals, you may read much more slowly and carefully, paying attention to every word.

It is important that you set your reading rate according to what you are reading and why you are reading it. Two important techniques to use when reading are those of *skimming* and *scanning*. These skills are used in different ways, at different times, and for different purposes. Both are ways to save time. Using *key words* when you read can also be a valuable time saver.

Skimming for a General Idea

Skimming reading material can be done for a variety of reasons. You may skim to

a. get a general idea of what something is about;
b. get a quick picture of the content of a passage;
c. make a quick review of something you have already read.

When you skim, let your eyes pass over the material, looking for key words or phrases that will tell you what you need to know. It is important to have a purpose in mind before you begin to skim.

When you are simply trying to see if you can use some type of material, such as a section in a how-to manual, skimming is very useful.

Use these techniques when you skim material:

1. Read all titles, subtitles, and headings of chapters and sections.
2. Glance over the content of the first and last sentences, paragraphs, or chapters, depending on the length of the material.
3. When skimming several pages at a time, flip through them, noting pictures as well as text.

Skill Builders 1

Skim over the following excerpt from a company manual for about 10 seconds. Then cover the excerpt, and answer as many questions as you can without looking back. Remember to focus on title and headings.

Annual Benefits Booklet

Paid Time Off

A Quick Look At the Plan

The Paid Time Off Plan provides you with income for up to five days when you have to miss work because of illness, injury, or personal business. The policies that support this plan are:

Excused Absence	Leave of Absence
Military Leave	Jury Duty

Highlights of the Paid Time Off Plan are:

Regular full-time employees receive payment based on their years of service.

Questions

1. What is the title of this manual?
   Annual Benefits Booklet

2. What is this particular section about?
   Paid Time Off

3. What key information is contained on this page?
   A summary of information for this plan

4. When might you use this? ***When you are going to be absent and you need to know if you are eligible for pay during that absence***

This exercise can also be applied to entire company manuals. Your instructor may supply you with some of your company's manuals to practice skimming, or you may choose to practice this skill on your own.

Skimming for More Content Information

After you have a general idea of what a passage is about, you may decide that it probably contains the information you are looking for. If you do not need all of the detail contained in the reading, you can save more time by skimming for content. In cases where you do need the details, you can still use skimming in order to understand the basic structure of the passage quickly and organize your thoughts while reading.

Use these techniques when skimming to get a picture of the content:

1. Read titles, subtitles, and any additional information in the title section.
2. Next, study illustrations for clues to the meaning of the passage.
3. Read the section headings or subheadings to get an idea of what type of information is given and what direction the passage takes.
4. Look at the opening and closing paragraphs. If a summary of information is given, quickly read it.

Key Words

In any reading passage, there are some words that carry a lot of meaning—*key words*—and other words that support these ideas or add description. If you focus on the key words and skip the support words, you will still understand what the passage is about. You may either skim by focusing on whatever key words you find, or you can skim while looking for specific key words that you have decided on in advance. The approach you take depends on your purpose for reading.

Skill Builders 2

Quickly read through the following passage, noting how long it takes you to read it. Write down your time. Then go back through it, and mark out all of the words that you think are not necessary in order to understand the key points and meaning of the text. ***Answers will vary, but italicized words may be marked out:***

> *Note* to *employees—when* checking books out *of the company* library, *please make sure that you* bring *your* ID card *to show to the librarian. Also, make sure that you note the due date of any books that you check out, and make an effort to* return *the* books on time. *Lately there have been many overdue books that are needed by other employees. Also, please* leave *any* briefcases or large backpacks at the rack by the door, or *leave them* in your office. *In response to employee requests, the library will now be* open from 7:00 A.M. until 6:00 P.M. *We hope these new hours will make the library even more accessible to all employees. Thank you for your assistance in complying with library policies.*

Speed for first reading: _____ seconds

After you have marked out all of the unneeded words, read back over the passage. Did you still understand the key points? How much faster did you read it this time?

Speed for second reading: _____ seconds

Think about the types of words that you chose to focus on as key words. In a later exercise, you will use this skill again.

Skimming for the Main Idea

When skimming for the main idea, you will use a combination of the techniques just covered. This time you will skim the text making note of clues such as headings, but also looking for the main idea in the text. To do this, you need to skim the passage, and when you think you have the main idea, focus on the key words, ignoring the rest of the passage. This process will take a little longer than the other skimming techniques, but it will still give you important information about a passage while saving time.

Scanning

Scanning is another quick reading technique. When *skimming*, you are trying to get a general idea about reading material. In contrast, when you are *scanning*, your aim is to search for a specific thing. For example, if you are trying to find information on the eating habits of butterflies, you may scan a passage looking for key words such as *butterflies* or *eating* or *feeding*. You would ignore any information in the passage that is not directly related to your topic.

You can use scanning when looking through statistical charts, job process sheets, chemical safety sheets, indexes, or other types of reference materials.

Use these techniques for scanning a passage:

1. Know in advance what key word or number you will look for. There may be more than one.
2. Let your eyes move quickly down the page, ignoring everything except for the key word or number that you are looking for.
3. It may be helpful to use your index finger to help focus your eyes and move down the page. (Try it both ways.)
4. When looking for words within a passage, you may need to move more slowly than when looking for numbers within a text of words.

Remember that both skimming and scanning skills improve with practice.

Skill Builders 3

1. Scan the number list below, and count the number of times that the number 239 appears. You have ten seconds to do this.

345	437	*The number 239 appears 3 times.*
635	239	
4322	932	
239	471	
5477	542	
453	5430	
683	327	
238	361	
349	932	
329	329	
539	863	
864	341	
239	236	
653	654	

2. Skim the following reading for about 30 seconds to gain an idea about specific content. Then answer the questions that follow.

Employee Benefits

Pension

Forms of Payment

Normal Form — Your benefits will be paid in one of the following normal forms unless you elect an optional form of payment. The form of retirement benefit you receive depends on the amount of your benefit and whether you are married or single.

If you are married — The 50% Joint and Survivor Annuity provides monthly payments for your lifetime. Then, at your death, your spouse, if still living, is entitled to half the amount you were receiving. This form of payment will be made unless you and your spouse specifically consent to an optional form of payment.

If you are not married — A single life annuity will be payable at age 65. This form of payment will be made unless you specifically consent to an optional form of payment.

If your lump-sum benefit is $3,500 or less	Even though your "normal" form of payment may be a 50% joint and survivor annuity or a single life annuity, your benefit will be paid in a lump-sum payment if the value of your lump-sum benefit is $3,500 or less.
Optional Forms of Payment	**Single Life Annuity** **120 Months or Ten-Year Certain Payments** **60 Months or Five-Year Certain Payments** **100% Joint and Survivor Annuity** **Lump-Sum Payment**

a. What is the title of the manual?
Employee Benefits

b. What is this section about?
Pension

c. What key content is found on this page?
Forms of Payment

d. What important details do you recall?
Answers will vary but should include types of payments.

3. *Apply the concept of key words and critical content to the following task:*

As the chief officer on duty for Airline XYZ, it is your job to convert the following fax received today into a telegram that will be sent to the managing flight director who is in another state. The message is critical to your business. You should only use key words in your telegram, since you are paying by the word.

> The delivery of 15 Boeing 737 airplanes, which you ordered for your new route expansion, will be delayed from the original date of May 15th to July 1st. We apologize for the inconvenience and possible problems this will cause, but due to the mechanics' strike, it is beyond our control. We will contact you should any further delays arise.

Your telegram would read:

Answers will vary but should be something like the following:

Delivery of 15 Boeing 737s delayed until 7/1. Mechanics strike—more delays possible.

4. *Use your scanning skills to complete the following:*

   a. Turn back to Skill Builders 3, #2, and scan to find out at what age you are eligible to receive a single-life annuity. **YOU HAVE 5 SECONDS.** (Remember to determine key words first.)

      Single person: at age 65
      Married person: does not apply.

   b. Turn to Skill Builders 2, and scan to find at what time the library will be closing. **YOU HAVE 5 SECONDS.**

      6:00 P.M.

Your instructor may give you manuals or materials from your company to use in continuing to practice skimming and scanning.

Check Yourself

1. When would you skim, and when would you scan?

   Skim: ***Skimming is done to get a general idea about content.***

   Scan: ***Scanning is done to locate a specific piece of information.***

2. What types of company materials would you skim, and which ones would you scan? ***This would depend upon what types of materials are used in your company.***

   Skim: ***Skimming is useful with general manuals and information readings.***

   Scan: ***Scanning can be useful with technical manuals when trying to find one particular thing.***

3. What are *key words*, and how can you use them?

   Key words are words that are vital to the meaning of a passage or piece of information. You will note key words when skimming for the main idea and ignore other words. Or, you will use key words when scanning for specific information.

MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Paraphrasing Information: Lesson 1.3

This lesson provides learners practice in reading for details and rewriting information in a shorter and clearer form.

Discuss with learners how often materials would be better if written in a shorter or clearer form. Also, point out how much easier it would be to follow instructions that focus on key points. Ask them to volunteer different materials that they would like to rewrite. If possible, ask them to bring these to this class (you may need to do this one week ahead of time unless their work area is close to the classroom).

Point out that simplifying information will be the focus of this lesson. The key point to this exercise is to identify and locate what information should be included in a paraphrase and what should be dropped.

Develop Your Understanding

Picking Out Key Details

Explain what key details are and how to identify them.

Guidelines for Paraphrasing Shorter Passages

You may want to review with learners what a main idea is and how to identify it. When paraphrasing, the main idea is the central point upon which the rest of the details depend.

This section focuses on paraphrasing readings that are fairly short. It involves:

1. finding the main idea; and
2. answering key questions about the main idea.

Point out to learners that the intent is to locate only information that is critical to the meaning of the passage.

Guidelines for Paraphrasing Longer Passages

This section focuses on longer passages. Obviously it would be difficult to answer the key questions for several different subjects and actions to be taken. Therefore, for a longer passage, the student should concentrate on:

1. finding the main idea; and
2. finding three or so key details that support the main idea.

Paraphrasing to Simplify or Shorten

The goal is to practice simplifying complex information. This is a good exercise to use with materials that the learners bring in. One suggestion is to simplify instructions such as those for starting up a computer. Remind learners to use the techniques practiced thus far. You will need to provide a handout, or have students bring instructions that they use on the job. For Exercise 3, this should be work-related and should be appropriate to demonstrate this skill.

Skill Builders 3

Exercise 3

Provide a handout for this example. The goal is to practice simplifying complex information. This is a good exercise to use with materials that the learners bring in.

Check Yourself

The focus of this section is for learners to paraphrase some material that they use. It could be a current job instruction sheet or the medical plan from the company handbook. The idea is to put the skill to use in a way that is immediately beneficial to learners.

If learners did not bring materials to class, you may ask them to go get some, have them use the company handbook, or have them complete this between this class and the next one.

Answers will vary and will require your individual attention. You may also have the class discuss varied approaches to different readings and share their ideas on how to paraphrase something.

Lesson 1.3
Paraphrasing Information

Learning Objectives

To practice reading for details
To practice rewriting information in a shorter and clearer form

Some of the materials you receive at work can be skimmed for the main idea only. Others must be read carefully for details. Once you have the details you need, it can be very helpful to *paraphrase* the information. Paraphrasing means rewriting or restating something in a shorter and clearer manner, using your own words. This can help with learning or remembering something, making instructions easier to understand, or relaying important information to another co-worker. In this lesson you will have a chance to practice paraphrasing information.

Vocabulary

paraphrase—to rewrite or restate a passage to make it clearer and shorter
key details—details of a passage that are critical to its meaning or are important to remember

Develop Your Understanding

Picking Out Key Details

To paraphrase written materials, you must first find the part of the information that is most important from your point of view. Next, list the *key details* that support this information. Key details are supporting points that are important to include in your message. Any details that are not

important to your purpose can be omitted when you paraphrase. The length of the reading material will determine the number and type of details to put in the shortened form. It is often a good idea to use your own words when paraphrasing, especially when the original passage is difficult to understand.

Before paraphrasing information, it is best to take notes. Below are guidelines to assist you in picking out important information.

Guidelines for Paraphrasing Short Passages

For information that is only a paragraph or two in length, you can:

1. find the main idea OR the main point that is important for your purpose
2. list key details about the main point by answering these questions:

   - *Who* or *what* did something, or *who* will do something?
   - *What* was done, or *what* will be done?
   - *Where* did this take place, or *where* will it be done?
   - *When* was it done, or *when* should it be done?
   - *Why* did it happen, or *why* will it happen?

   You may not be able to answer all of these questions for every reading passage. It will depend on what information your reading material contains.

Skill Builders 1

Imagine that you are the lead operator on a manufacturing line at the Austin site of XYZ Computer Company. You have just received a long memo from your manager that includes the information below. You must pick out the information that is most important to your group and paraphrase it.

First, read this excerpt:

> ...This year 38 companies submitted applications in the manufacturing category, but only nine were chosen for site visits. The Baldridge award committee will visit the XYZ Group on October 5. The Austin site is one of 13 XYZ sites (not including marketing/field offices and leased, temporary locations). It represents 2 percent of XYZ employees, and its primary business is automated production of printed wiring boards for all XYZ products. Austin site managers won't know if the Baldridge committee will visit the Austin site until the end of September. A simulated Baldridge site visit will occur on September 15.

Answer these questions:

1. What would be *your main purpose* in passing this information on to the operators on your line? ***To inform the XYZ Group that the Malcolm Baldridge Award Committee will visit October 5th***

2. Analyze the passage using the *Guidelines for Paraphrasing Short Passages*:

   Who? ***the Malcolm Baldridge Award Committee***

   What? ***will visit the XYZ Group***

   Where? ***13 possible sites (specific ones unknown as yet)***

   When? ***October 5th***

   Why? ***to determine whether we win a Baldridge Award***

3. Now paraphrase the information in the space provided, being careful to include only what is important for your purpose:

Answers will vary.

4. a. Which details from the original did you decide to leave out?

   Answers will vary.

b. Why are these details unimportant?

Answers will vary.

Guidelines for Paraphrasing Longer Passages

For written information that is longer than a paragraph or two, you should:

1. find the main idea OR the main point that is important for your purpose;
2. find three key details that support the main idea; answers to the key questions listed above should help you find these; and
3. state the main idea and the three key details that support it.

Although the guidelines recommend that you find *three* key details, sometimes you will need to include more. If you are reading something longer than one or two paragraphs, you may also find more than one answer to the key questions. Look for a larger picture, and find key details that address the most important point of the entire passage *from your point of view*. Include only those details that are *critical* to understanding the message. For example, you may ask, "What am I supposed to do? When? Where?" and so on.

Skill Builders 2

The reading passage below contains information an employee of XYZ Company might want to remember. Read the passage, and answer the questions that follow.

> "...To help you take full advantage of the opportunities within our company, the company provides a broad variety of educational and training programs to improve your skills.
>
> The most common method of training is on-the-job training under the guidance of your supervisor. However, specific courses are available in job-related subjects. In many company organizations, an individual training and education plan defines the courses appropriate for each job. Employees and their supervisors should regularly review this plan and schedule classes as needed.
>
> The company encourages continued education for regular, full-time employees through the Educational Assistance program. If you satisfactorily complete an approved course (with a grade of "C" or better) that will help you in your present or expected job, the company will help offset the cost to you. For undergraduate and graduate college work, the company will pay 100% of the eligible cost of course work up to a maximum of $100 per semester hour. It will pay 80% of the course cost if it exceeds $100 per semester hour. Eligible costs include tuition, books, and fees for courses you take at an approved school.

To qualify for the Educational Assistance program, you must have a degree plan approved by the school, your supervisor, and your Educational Assistance administrator before you register for the course. The degree plan must be entered into the Educational Management Computer System. Courses are then selected each term on this computer system. When you have satisfactorily completed a course with a grade of "C" or better, you must submit your grades and paid receipt to your Educational Assistance coordinator to be paid back for your costs... ."

Answers may vary somewhat for this exercise. The main goal is to focus on details that are critical to the overall meaning. Learners also need to understand relationships between the main idea and key supporting details. Drawing arrows or boxes is a good way to show these relationships.

1. Write the main idea that would be important to remember:
   The company provides a variety of educational and training programs to help you improve your skills.

2. Write the three most important supporting details in the passage:
   These programs include:

   (1) ***on-the-job training under your supervisor.***

   (2) ***taking company courses outlined on your individual education and training plan.***

   (3) ***the Educational Assistance program that reimburses employees for the costs of taking approved college courses that are completed with a grade of "C" or better.***

Paraphrasing to Simplify or Shorten

One way to use paraphrasing is to simplify written information that is very long or complex. In many cases, you will be able to write materials in a shortened form without leaving out anything vital. This can be especially useful with detailed procedures or instructions.

You may substitute procedures that you use at your job for the exercise on the next page.

Skill Builders 3

Exercise 1

After you have read the information, simplify it by listing the main idea and key details as you have practiced. Write your ideas in the space after the passage.

1. SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

1.1 Safety glasses and safety shoes are required for the performance of this process. Contact lenses are not allowed in the area.

1.2 Smocks and caps must be worn at all times when working in the lay-up area. When smocks are not in use, they must be hung on the coat rack.

1.3 Vacuum fixtures and lamination packages are heavy. Handle carefully.

1.4 Long hair, jewelry, and loose clothing should be arranged to prevent entanglement in moving parts of equipment.

1.5 Hands should be washed thoroughly with soap and water before smoking or eating, especially after handling Teflon-coated equipment and materials.

1.6 We are required by OSHA's Hazard Communication Standard (HAZCOM), to maintain a list of all potentially hazardous chemicals that are used in the workplace. We must also maintain a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for each chemical. The sheets must be available for viewing by all employees at all times.

Paraphrase: ***One example: This passage is mainly about six safety precautions to be taken. Wear safety glasses, safety shoes, smock, and cap. Do not wear contact lenses. Be careful of heavy lifting; avoid loose hair and dangling jewelry. Wash hands afterwards. Check MSDS for more information.***

Exercise 2

Read the following paragraph. In the space that follows, write what you think is the main idea and then the most important details that support the main idea.

> ...The new safety program will have a site-wide kickoff on Monday the 12th. There will be information flyers throughout the plant for employees to read. Be sure to pick one up. There will be various seminars offered this month that will explain the new focus of the safety program and how employees may participate. The main focus will be to make safety everyone's #1 job. Join in and find out how you can take part in making the site a safer place to work!

Main idea: ***A new safety program will begin Monday the 12th.***

Supporting details: ***Information flyers and seminars will explain the program—main focus is to make safety the responsibility of the individual.***

Exercise 3

Use any type of printed material from your company for this exercise. Practice finding the main idea and answering the five key questions about the main idea.

a. What type of material is this? ***Answers will vary.***

b. What is the main idea? ***Answers will vary.***

c. Key details about the main idea (answer the key questions):

Who? ***Answers will vary.***

What?

When?

Where?

Why?

Other critical details:

Paraphrase:

Answers will vary.

Check Yourself

Try rewriting instructions in a manner that paraphrases or simplifies them. Find something this week that you can practice this skill on and that will be useful to you.

Answers will vary.

MEMO

To: The Instructor
From: The Authors
Subject: Following Instructions: Lesson 1.4

This lesson focuses on reading and understanding instructions and on developing a strategy for following instructions.

Begin with a discussion of the introductory statement in the lesson. Talk about the importance of taking the time to read and follow instructions before taking action.

Try This

This can be a fun activity, but must be presented with caution. DO NOT READ INSTRUCTIONS TO THE CLASS. The entire point is to see how well they can read and understand instructions. Learners that do the activity correctly will be through in a very short time. Learners that do the activity incorrectly will have a paper with a square, triangle, circle, and rectangle bearing the message "why r u doing this?"

Develop Your Understanding

Read the text aloud to the class, emphasizing the four-step strategy for following instructions. Stress the use of practical strategies for task completion that can be used on the job.

Skill Builders

Model the skills first. Then take learners through a guided practice exercise. The remaining exercises may be done individually or in small groups. Be sure

to go over correct answers and give practical suggestions to help learners master this skill and apply this on the job.

Check Yourself

Learners work independently on this section. Review the four-step strategy for following instructions after checking for correct responses.

Lesson 1.4
Following Instructions

Learning Objectives

To read and understand instructions
To develop a strategy for following instructions

Following instructions accurately is an important skill used in many parts of your life. Getting it right the first time is especially critical at work, where dollars or time may be lost due to carelessness. Some people are very capable but have trouble following instructions. Others can learn all the material in a training course but must repeat the course because they didn't take the time to read the instructions on the test. By using a strategy to complete tasks at work, you can learn to avoid these problems most of the time.

Try This

Read the sentences below, and follow the instructions. Be sure to read all ten sentences before you mark your paper.

1. On a clean sheet of paper, print your name and the date in the upper left-hand corner.
2. Print the name of your instructor in the upper right-hand corner.
3. Print the name of the program you are enrolled in under the name of your instructor.
4. Draw a large square in the middle of the paper.
5. Print the letters *w*, *h*, and *y* in the square.
6. Draw a triangle next to the square, and print the letters *r* and *u* in the triangle.
7. Draw a circle under the square, and write the word "doing" inside the circle.
8. Draw a rectangle, and print the word "this" on top of the rectangle. Put a "?" after the word "this."
9. Now that you have read all instructions, omit steps four through eight.
10. Turn in your paper. ***If the learner followed instructions, he/she should turn in a paper with only steps 1-3 completed.***

Develop Your Understanding

In the previous activity, the instructions told you to read all ten steps before you marked your paper. Even if you understood the ten steps, you may have failed to follow the directions.

A series of step-by-step directions or instructions is called a *procedure*. Since many instructions and procedures are used at work, it's a good idea to develop a strategy for following them. One such strategy is outlined below.

Strategy for Task Completion

1. **Define the task.** *What do you want to accomplish?*
2. **Outline the steps.** *How will you get there?*
3. **List items needed to complete the task.** *This may include equipment, supplies, or information.*
4. **Clarify.** *Make sure you understand the task thoroughly before you begin. Don't hesitate to ask questions.*

Skill Builders

1. Your supervisor leaves this message on your work table. ***"Please return these faulty test lamps. When turned on, the sockets smoldered, and the light bulbs exploded. Here is the copy of the invoice. Ask for a full refund."***

   Using the Strategy for Task Completion, complete the following:

   a. Define the task.

   Return faulty test lamps.

   b. Outline the steps you must take in order to complete the task.

   Read copy of invoice.
   Write or call company.
   Ask for full refund.

c. What materials do you need to complete the task?

Invoice

d. What additional information do you need to clarify the task?

The supervisor needs to clarify if the task is to be completed by phone, letter, or in person. Also, he/she needs to explain what should be done with the refund.

2. Your supervisor places this memo in your mailbox.

TO: ALL EMPLOYEES
FROM: SAFETY MANAGER
DATE: 10-10-92
SUBJECT: SAFETY RULES

TO INDICATE YOU HAVE RECEIVED A COPY OF THE NEW SAFETY RULES, PLEASE SIGN THIS MEMO, AND RETURN TO YOUR SUPERVISOR. THIS WILL BE PLACED IN YOUR PERSONNEL FILE.

Can you list the steps in the Strategy for Task Completion from memory? List the steps here:

a. ***Define the task.***
Sign and return memo.

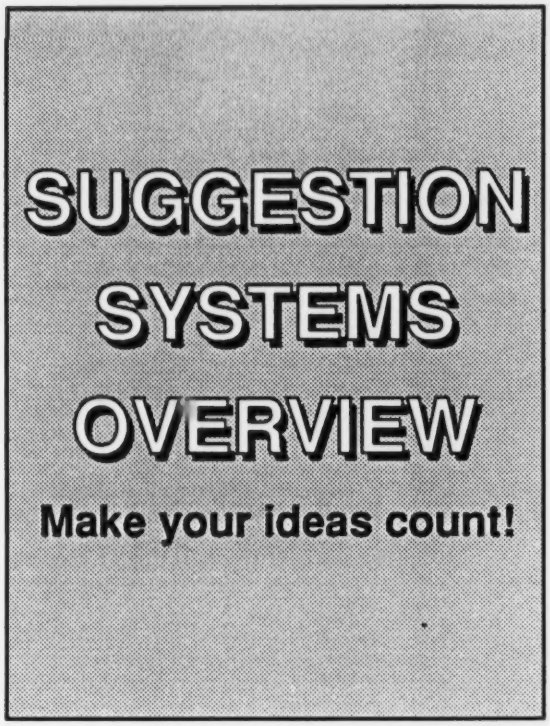
b. ***Outline the steps.***
Confirm that manual was received. Sign memo and send it to supervisor.

c. ***List items needed to complete task.***
Pen, memo, safety manual

d. ***Clarify.***
Be sure that I actually have the manual. I may want to find out whether signing this means that I have read and understood the manual.

Next, go back and write specific information about *this* memo for each of the steps.

3. This brochure was sent to all employees of UR2 Graphics. Read the instructions, then answer the questions on the next page.



HOW TO TURN IN A SUGGESTION

One suggestion per form.

Check appropriate type of suggestion (Cost Savings, Safety, Miscellaneous).

Joint submissions may be made by up to five (5) employees.

Describe in specific detail - appropriate sketches should accompany suggestions.

The idea should be clearly outlined or detailed.

Explain how the idea is to be accomplished.

Explain how it is beneficial to the Company.

Suggestion form must be signed and dated by all suggestor(s). Please include your employee number(s).

NOTE: Any suggestion turned in without a signature will not be responded to.

Remember, these questions apply to ***following the instructions for making a suggestion.*** *They are not about the suggestion itself.*

a. Define the task.

Turn in a suggestion to company.

b. What steps will you take to complete this task?

Get form, check appropriate suggestion, follow instructions, sign, and date.

c. What materials do you need to complete this task?

Form, pen/pencil

d. What needs to be done to clarify the task?

Answers will vary.

e. Using the instructions on the previous page, use this suggestion form to make a suggestion to your company:

If appropriate and learners agree, have them do this exercise again on company forms and actually submit their suggestions.

SUGGESTIONS

SAFETY____ COST SAVINGS____ MISC. ____

Name _____ Date _____

4. Drive an imaginary car along the streets as directed. Using the map provided, follow the instructions.

   a. Start at the intersection of Trinity and East 6th Street. Go north to 11th Street. Turn left. Proceed to Lavaca. Turn right. Draw an X at the next street you come to.

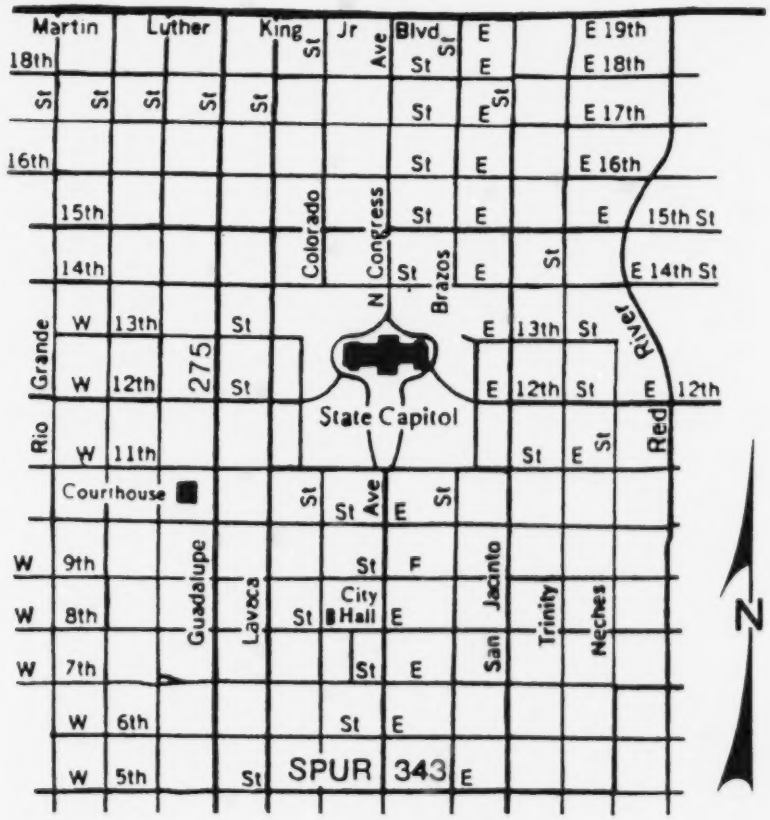
   X at 12th and Lavaca

   b. Start at the intersection of 16th Street and Rio Grande. Go south on Rio Grande to 14th Street. Turn left. Drive three blocks, and turn right. Proceed to the fourth intersection, and draw a circle around it.

   Circle at 10th and Guadalupe

   c. Start at the intersection of Martin Luther King, Jr., Blvd. and Brazos. Go south four blocks. Turn east. Drive three blocks. Turn south on Red River. Draw a square around the next intersection.

   Square at 14th and Red River



CITY STREET MAP

Check Yourself

Suppose that you have received the following note from your supervisor:

> I'd like you to do some research for me. We have been buying widgets and gizmos from Brandex Company, which has just raised its prices by 15%. I'd like to find out if we can get these parts cheaper. Price is not the only consideration, though; we need high quality, quick delivery, and good service. Give me a report by Monday afternoon. Thanks.

1. Define the task:

   Gather information on quality, price, delivery, and service of widgets and gizmos for companies other than Brandex. Give a report on this information to supervisor by Monday afternoon.

2. Outline the steps:

   (Answers may vary.)
   Check the phone book for alternatives to Brandex. Call each company to get pricing and delivery information. Consult industry publications for information about quality. Put this information into a report.

3. List items needed:

   Telephone book, industry publications, note pad, writing utensil, typewriter or word processor

4. Would you clarify anything? What?

   Ask supervisor to prioritize qualities desired. (Which is most important?)

5. How could you go beyond the minimum expectations for this task and do a truly excellent job?

   (Answers may vary.) Provide a chart for easy comparison of all the factors for different companies. Make your own recommendation. Offer to follow up once the supervisor has made a decision.

MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Writing Instructions: Lesson 1.5

This lesson focuses on putting instructions in proper sequence, writing clear instructions, and critiquing instructions written by others.

The introductory exercise presents an opportunity for learners to discuss any frustrations they have felt with written instructions in the past. You may want to mention assembly instructions for furniture and other products in addition to workplace examples in order to stimulate thought. They may not come up with five characteristics of clear/unclear instructions, or they may come up with more. The discussion may give you clues to decide which exercises to try or which points about writing procedures you wish to emphasize during the lesson.

Suggestions:

Clear Instructions	*Unclear Instructions*
Written in sequential order	No organization
Written in simple, everyday language	Highly technical language
No details left out	Many details omitted
Terms defined	Undefined terms
Pictures or diagrams included	No visual aids

Vocabulary

Be sure that learners understand the difference between *critique* and *criticize* in the negative sense.

Develop Your Understanding

Sequence and Detail

Point out that any instructions that take the form of general warnings or precautions should be listed first.

Writing and Critiquing Instructions

The purpose of this section is to encourage learners to apply their analytical skills to the process of writing good directions. Learners should work in pairs or groups to critique each other's work. It would be a good idea to let learners generate the ground rules for critiquing. For example, the purpose of a critique is to help rather than to criticize, to point out what is positive as well as what needs improvement, etc. This activity can be tied in to team operations in the workplace.

Skill Builders

Each learner should receive feedback from other learners and you. Be sure to point out what learners have done well in addition to any recommendations for improvement.

Check Yourself

This exercise may be done in class if time allows or afterwards for review. Learners will probably enjoy reading others' instructions. Some of the instructions may be useful to other learners; give them the option of photocopying them with the originator's permission.

Closure

After learners have had practice critiquing each other's work, return to the discussion on characteristics of good instructions and see if they have things to add. You may also want to discuss what they got out of the process of critiquing and how this may apply in the workplace. The concept of critiquing

should be integrated into future lessons in this book. This will focus learners' attention on the quality of the things they read and how some of them might be altered or improved.

Lesson 1.5
Writing Instructions

Learning Objectives

To put instructions in proper sequence
To write clear instructions
To critique instructions written by others

In the last lesson you practiced reading, understanding, and following written instructions. In this lesson, you will look at how written instructions may be put in a sequence. You will then have a chance to try writing and sequencing your own set of instructions for your classmates.

Think about any instructions or procedures you have found difficult to follow in the past. What makes instructions difficult to follow? What makes them easy? What qualities do well-written procedures share? After discussing this with a partner or the class, add items to the lists below.

Qualities of Unclear Instructions	**Qualities of Clear Instructions**
1. No organization	1. Written in the proper order
2. Difficult, technical language	2. Simple, everyday language
3. ***Answers will vary.***	3. ***Answers will vary.***
4.	4.
5.	5.

Vocabulary

sequence—a following of one thing after another, in order
critique—to analyze or evaluate; judge the good points and bad points of something

Develop Your Understanding

Sequence and Detail

The most common way to organize instructions is to put them in *time order sequence:* what to do first, second, and so on. An exception to this is that instructions which apply generally to all actions taken in the procedure or contain information vital to the success of the procedure may be placed first.

If instructions are not written in the proper sequence or if vital information is omitted, the instructions will be difficult or even impossible to follow. When writing instructions for job procedures, for example, an experienced employee may be able to follow a general outline, but a new employee would require much more detail in order to follow the instructions successfully.

Skill Builders 1

1. Below is a set of general instructions for operating an injection molding machine. *Injection molding* is a method of producing plastic articles.

   1. Wear eye protection.
   2. Set up the injection molder for operation.
   3. Be careful using hand or machine tools.
   4. Inject plastic into the mold.
   5. Be careful of hot plastic—wear cotton gloves.
   6. Continue molding until you have obtained twelve acceptable products.
   7. Give plastic dwell time in the mold.

a. Put the instructions in a logical sequence by listing their numbers below. The first and last are done for you.

   3, 5, 1, 2, 4, 7, 6 ***(or 3, 1, 5, 2, 4, 7, 6)***

b. If you have never done injection molding, these instructions may look incomplete. List at least three questions you might ask about the instructions before you would be ready to start the procedure.

   1. ***How is the injection molder set up?***
   2. ***How is plastic injected into the mold?***
   3. ***What is "dwell time"? How much time is needed?***
   4. ***How do I know if a product is "acceptable," etc.?***

2. A friend of yours has given you a bottle of flea spray to use on your pet, along with a note explaining how to use it. Since your friend typed the note in a hurry, the directions are not in any particular order. Read the note:

> This stuff works very well, but you may need to do it more than once to get rid of the fleas. Be sure to cover Fluffy's eyes with your hand before you spray so the spray won't get into her eyes. You need to take off the safety cap and put the sprayer into the bottle. Spray her head, ears, and chest first until they're wet, then use your fingertips to rub the spray into her face (not her eyes or mouth). Then spray the rest. It works best if you spray *against* the fur. Finish the legs last.
>
> I hope this solves your problem!

In the space below, rewrite your friend's directions in list form and in the proper order. Omit unnecessary words. Some of the steps may be combined. You should have about 5-7 steps in your directions.

Many variations are possible, but the basic order should be the same. The first two cautionary statements may be listed at the beginning or put in the body of the instructions in the appropriate place.

1. ***Do not get spray into animal's eyes or mouth. For best results, spray against the fur.***

2. ***Take off safety cap, and insert sprayer into bottle.***

3. ***Cover animal's eyes with your hand before spraying.***

4. ***Spray animal's head, ears, and chest until wet; rub into other areas of the face with your fingertips.***

5. ***Spray remaining areas, finishing with the legs.***

6. ***Repeat if necessary.***

Writing and Critiquing Instructions

Below are some general guidelines for writing instructions that will help you keep your instructions clear and effective.

Guidelines for Writing Instructions

1. Keep your audience in mind. Don't assume they know everything you do.
2. Define any technical or special words and abbreviations.
3. Instructions written in numbered sequence are easiest to follow.
4. List tips, precautions, and general information at the beginning.
5. Use language that is as simple and clear as possible.
6. Review your instructions to see if you have left anything out. If possible, test them on another person who is not familiar with the task.

Not all instructions are well written. If you have difficulty following a set of instructions, it is not always you who is at fault. Once you have learned how to do a task, you may want to *critique* the written instructions and improve upon them by simplifying the steps or adding information that has been left out. In Exercise 1b in the Skill Builders section above, you critiqued the instructions for injection molding by pointing out what vital information was not included.

When you get ready to critique instructions, remember that there is a difference between critiquing and criticizing. Critiquing can be a very helpful process that will improve your writing, if it is done properly. Here are some rules to keep in mind:

Guidelines for Critiquing Instructions

1. Be analytical. Look for ways to improve what is already there to make it more clear or more exact.
2. Be constructive. Point out what is good about the instructions as well as what is bad.
3. Be specific. Instead of just pointing out *what* can be changed, point out *how* it can be changed.

Skill Builders 2

1. a. Choose a location that is at least three miles away from the building you are in now. Write a set of directions for another person to follow in order to get to this location. Assume that the person is familiar with your city. You may include a map, but the directions should be written in words. Write the directions below:

Answers will vary.

b. Now add additional information you would include for a person who is not familiar with your city:

Answers will vary.

c. Exchange directions with a classmate, and critique the directions you receive. Are they clear? Would you be able to follow them? Has anything been left out?

Answers will vary.

2. Try writing one or more of the following sets of instructions. Assume that you are writing instructions for a new employee who is unfamiliar with your company and your work. Exchange instructions with a classmate and critique, then rewrite them if necessary.

   a. Write instructions for setting up your area at the beginning of your shift.

   b. Choose any complex task you do at your job, and write instructions for it.

   c. Working in pairs or groups, critique a set of written instructions, and write a new set that is more clear, accurate, and/or detailed.

   Answers will vary.

Check Yourself

Use your creativity to practice what you've learned about writing instructions.

Write a set of instructions intended to teach something to your classmates. It could be a recipe, a hobby, or even something humorous. This time, it does not have to be work-related. Give the instructions to a classmate and ask for a critique.

Answers will vary.

MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Improving Recall: Lesson 1.6

This lesson focuses on several techniques for remembering information.

The purpose of this lesson is to present several tips and techniques to assist learners in remembering information. Learners will find some techniques more useful than others. One goal for this lesson is to introduce the various techniques and give learners an opportunity to try each one and practice using them. By the end of the lesson it is hoped learners will have found one or more techniques that they like and are comfortable using.

Although materials are provided for use in this lesson, it is recommended that you provide additional company-specific materials for learners to practice with.

Develop Your Understanding

Focusing

Discuss the fact that memory can be improved with practice. There are also specific actions that learners can take to increase memory. You may highlight these points:

1. Concentration is critical to memory. You must block out distracting noises and thoughts.
2. Before reading, learners should think about what questions they want answered in the reading. These questions should be kept in mind as they read to find the answers.

Repetition

The goal of this technique is to involve as many senses and as much of the mind as possible. The more the mind is involved in remembering, the better it remembers. The techniques to accomplish this include:

1. repeating or writing key parts of something;
2. illustrating or drawing pictures to represent something;
3. outlining or summarizing in the learners' own words—rewriting something (learners should internalize and restate);
4. quizzing or testing oneself after reading to test for recall, locating correct answers if needed.

Try This

This is an opportunity for class members to practice their memory skills interactively. Instructions can be serious or in fun, depending on the individual class. While only one learner will perform each set of instructions, the entire class can stay involved by monitoring the performance of the tasks and checking it against his or her own memory. Afterwards, the learner who performed the steps can discuss what memory techniques were used and what was most helpful.

Mnemonic Devices

This section focuses on the use of association. Learners may associate patterns of behavior, letters, words, habits, etc., with something to be remembered. They may also visualize the ridiculous and associate that with the item to be recalled. Mnemonic devices try to match the first letter of words with the first letter of words to be remembered. You may review the mnemonic device for remembering planets mentioned in the lesson.

Suggestions for supplementary exercises:

1. Have learners come up with their own sentences for remembering things. Something work-related would be best. Other possibilities are the names of continents, oceans, or the Great Lakes.

2. Find out how many common acronyms learners can explain. Some possibilities: IRA (Individual Retirement Account), COD (Cash on Delivery), NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), and CEO (Chief Executive Officer).

3. Have the class come up with mnemonic devices to remember the spellings of words they consider difficult.

Acronyms are words in which each letter stands for something to be remembered. Go over the examples in the lesson showing them how this works.

Imagery

Imagery or visualization involves picturing something in your mind that will remind you of the item to be remembered. You may picture the ridiculous or routine. One application of this when learning lists or sequences is to pair each item in the list with something well known. For example, you may use the pictures in the hallway of your house, or the houses of each of your neighbors as you go down your street, or the streets that you pass on your way home. The idea is that by remembering the streets or houses, or whatever, in the order in which they occur, you will remember the item that is paired with each in order.

Instruct learners to try to think of something that is very familiar to them that they could use to do this. Then have them use any of these techniques to complete the Now Try These exercises.

Skill Builders

You may have learners do these individually, in small groups, or as a large group. It is recommended that you go through the exercises with learners to assist them when needed. You may want to provide other workplace readings with which to practice these skills.

Check Yourself

This section tries to help the learner personalize what they have learned in this lesson. The main idea is to encourage them to take one or more of the techniques and try them the following week.

At the start of the next lesson, you may want to poll the class and find out which techniques they tried and how they worked.

There are many memory books on the market that teach how to learn names quickly by associating them with faces. This can be an interesting and useful expansion exercise.

Lesson 1.6
Improving Recall

Learning Objective

To practice using several techniques for remembering information

There are many times at work when you will need to remember information you have read or heard. It may be a new procedure, information from a safety manual, the name of a new co-worker, or the spelling of a technical word. There are several techniques that can help you remember information. In this lesson, we will look at some of these techniques and practice using them.

Vocabulary

mnemonic device—something, such as a verse or formula, that assists the memory
acronym—a word formed from the first letters of a group of words
imagery method—using mental images to remember information

Develop Your Understanding

Memory is a skill that can be improved with practice. There are also specific actions that you can take to increase your memory of different types of information.

Focusing

When reading material at work, begin by focusing only on what you need to remember. Concentrate, blocking out distracting noises and thoughts.

Think about questions that you want answered as you read, and look for those answers. Ignore the rest of the text. This is somewhat similar to the idea of scanning, except that you are reading all of the words but only trying to remember the key ones that answer your questions.

Skill Builders 1

Imagine that you are thinking about taking a leave of absence (LOA) to travel for several months. You want to know what you will have to do to arrange the LOA and how it will affect your position. You particularly want answers to the following questions:

- Who must approve the LOA?
- What if I'm not sure exactly when I want to come back?
- Will I still have my job when I come back?

Now, read the following passage *one time only*, focusing on the answers to these questions. When you have finished, answer the True/False questions on the next page *without* looking back at the passage.

> Leaves of absence have specific beginning and ending dates. You must have approval for an LOA from your supervisor and/or Health Center and your Human Resources office before your leave begins. Changes to the beginning or ending dates must be requested in writing and be approved in advance by your supervisor or Human Resources office. Failure to return to work or to notify your supervisor, as well as your Human Resources office, on the ending date of an LOA can result in the termination of your employment.
>
> Notify your supervisor or Human Resources office of your availability to return to work at least 1 week before your LOA expires, or before you plan to return to work if sooner. If you are returning from medical or maternity LOA, you must be cleared through the Health Center before you can return to work.
>
> On return from medical, maternity, paternity, military (or other government) LOA, you are eligible for a job in the same division with the status and pay of the job you held when you began your LOA, provided that work is still being performed and you are physically qualified to perform it. Employees returning from any other type of LOA may be eligible for a job with the same status and pay of the job they held when the absence began, provided an opening exists and you are capable of performing it.

True or False

False 1. It is all right to go on LOA without giving a specific ending date.

False 2. You only need to get approval for an LOA from your Human Resources office.

True 3. You need to notify your Human Resources officer and your supervisor only one week before your leave ends and you plan to return to work. ***(True, unless returning sooner than planned.)***

False 4. You are guaranteed the same job back when you return from your LOA.

Were you able to remember all of the answers? Check the reading passage again. It is easier to remember things when you have a specific situation to address.

Repetition

Repetition is critical when you want to remember something. By repeating words or actions to yourself, you can make a mental imprint of that information that will help you recall it later. When you are committing something to memory, use as much of your mind as possible. This is helpful because people learn in different ways: some learn best by picturing things, others by reading or hearing things, and still others by doing things. Many people remember things best when several techniques are combined. Therefore, to increase your recall of things you read, try some or all of the following:

1. Write down specific information (instructions, for example) as you go over it.
2. Draw pictures illustrating what you need to remember.
3. Paraphrase or summarize in your own words what you need to recall. That does not mean just copying down the instructions or procedures, but reading them a section at a time and then writing down your own interpretation or idea of what they said.
4. Quiz yourself over the material after you have read it. This will help you check how much of it you have learned and what you need to review.

Doing any or all of these things can help because repeating the information over and over is a key to remembering it.

Try This

Try this with a group of people:

Each person in the group should write a short list of instructions, with about 6 or 7 items on the list. One person will follow each set of instructions. Instructions will either be read aloud or given in writing. If read aloud, the instructions will be read ONE TIME ONLY. If given in writing, the person has only 30 seconds to read the instructions. This person should then carry

out the instructions, while the group watches to make sure the instructions are carried out correctly. Here is one example:

Example

1. Come into the room, and greet the first person that you see.
2. Write your last name and the number 25 on the board.
3. Walk to the back of the room, and open the left side of the cabinet.
4. Straighten the three chairs in the back of the room.
5. Take a blue pen from the side table.
6. Say, "I'm finished," and sit down.

Use any techniques you can to memorize the instructions that are read to you. Afterwards, discuss what helped you remember the instructions.

Mnemonic Devices

Are you a person who uses "tricks" to jog your memory? If so, you are using *mnemonic devices*. A mnemonic (pronounced ne-mon-ic) device can be a little sentence, rhyme, or formula that helps you remember something.

One type of mnemonic device is to match something about the thing you want to remember to the first letters of words in a sentence. This is most helpful when you need to memorize a sequence, or remember things in a particular order. Students of music have long been taught the sentence "**E**very **g**ood **b**oy **d**oes **f**ine" to memorize the lines of the treble clef: **E, G, B, D,** and **F**. To remember the order of the planets, you might construct a sentence like this: **Me**l's **v**iper **e**ats **ma**rgarine, **j**am, and **s**ugar **u**nder **N**ancy's **p**orch (**Me**rcury, **V**enus, **E**arth, **Ma**rs, **J**upiter, **S**aturn, **U**ranus, **N**eptune, **P**luto).

A second type of mnemonic device is called an *acronym*. This is a word made up of the first letters of other words. Some examples are FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), IRS (Internal Revenue Service) and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). You may enjoy experimenting with making your own acronyms for names and expressions that are rather long.

Mnemonic devices can be particularly helpful if you are trying to remember spellings of words. If a word is spelled differently from the way it is pronounced, try imagining how the word would sound if pronounced as it is spelled. This technique can help you to spell the word later.

Other techniques work by relating new information to information that is easy to remember. For example, if you have difficulty remembering when to use the words *there* and *their:*

If you cover up the "t" in *there*, you have "here"; relates to *location*
If you cover up the "t" in *their*, you have "heir"; relates to a *person*

For *stationary* and *stationery:*

There is an "a" in *stand* and an "a" in *stationary*: not moving
There is an "e" in *envelope* and an "e" in *stationery*: writing materials

Skill Builders 2

Think of mnemonic devices to help remember the spellings of the following words:

These are examples of answers; there is no one "correct" answer.

1. height

   The height is eight feet.

2. environment

   Associate the name Ron with environment.

3. basically

   A basic ally.

Imagery

One of the most effective ways to remember things is to use mental pictures or *imagery*. You can use ordinary images or ridiculous ones; whatever will best trigger your memory. Suppose you wanted to remember this shopping list:

eggs
plastic bags
milk
apples
bread
light bulbs
cheese

This time, instead of trying to memorize the list, create a picture in your mind. See yourself in a room with bright, blazing light bulbs hanging from the ceiling. You are eating a cheese sandwich (bread and cheese). You are also drinking milk mixed with raw eggs to keep up your strength. On the floor is a large plastic bag filled with shiny red apples. In order to get the image firmly fixed in your mind, use all your senses to imagine: How does that cheese sandwich taste? How about the milk and eggs? Are the light bulbs making it hot in the room? What does the plastic bag look like? These details will make the picture easy to recall when you are at the store.

Skill Builders 3

1. Taking exactly one minute, use imagery to memorize this list of cleaning fluids.

   Each bottle of fluid is labeled with an adhesive dot. The dots are color-coded as follows:

Blue dot	Cleaning fluid for steel
Red dot	Cleaning fluid for glass only
Yellow dot	Linoleum stain remover
Purple dot	Stain remover for fabrics
Green dot	Plain water

   One possibility: blue steel, rose-colored glasses, yellow floor, purple dress, green pond

2. The following is a partial list of safety signs and their meanings. You will need to be able to recall five of them. Your instructor will tell you which ones to remember. Using the techniques discussed above, you have 3 minutes to learn them. Begin when instructed.

   When told to stop, turn the page face down, and on the back write the signs and symbols that you recall.

   Encourage any technique that proves effective for remembering the information accurately.

3. Take notes or draw pictures or summarize in your own words the following equipment setup procedure. Try not to take much longer than 2 minutes to learn it using this recall technique.

Encourage any technique that proves effective for remembering the information accurately.

Write the key points to the setup in the space following the procedure.

2	**EQUIPMENT SETUP**
2.1	Startup Procedure—
2.1.1	Push green POWER button on the center of the table to power up.
2.2	Shutdown Procedure—
2.2.1	Operators will wipe down the station with a lintfree cloth at the end of each shift and as needed during the shift.
2.2.2	Ensure that lift mechanism is in the UP position and at the back of the table.
2.2.3	Push red OFF button, on the table (next to POWER button), to power down.
2.2.4	On station #1, push both pulsebar controller buttons to OFF.

4. Think of a mnemonic device to remember the difference between *principal* (the head of a school) and *principle* (a fundamental rule).

Example: ***The principal is my pal (a person).***
The principle is a simple rule.

5. Make up an acronym for an expression used at your company.

Answers will vary.

Check Yourself

Find an opportunity this week to try one of the methods you studied in this lesson, and be ready to share at the next class session how successful you were.

MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Working with Tables and Graphs: Lesson 1.7

This lesson provides review of the major types of tables and graphs used in the workplace, practice interpreting the information presented in tables and graphs, and practice constructing tables and graphs.

In order to prepare for this lesson, **provide specific examples** of tables and graphs used routinely at work as well as other examples from newspapers or other industries. Emphasis should be placed on training learners to look carefully at legends, headings, and other clues before digesting the information.

Materials: It would be helpful to provide graph paper, rulers, and pencils for graphing exercises.

This lesson may require more than two hours to complete. Some of the graphing exercises may be cut if time is restricted. While you may wish to emphasize precision, the purpose of the graphing exercises is to demonstrate learners' understanding of the process of graphing rather than to produce perfect graphs.

Vocabulary

Note that *chart* is often used interchangeably with *table* or *graph*.

Legends may also be called *keys*.

Try This

Go over the correct answers with learners. Note where they encounter difficulty and address those areas as you proceed through the lesson.

Develop Your Understanding

Tables

Learners may have seen a table like the one in Example 1 before. The point of this exercise is the importance of column headings when information is presented in such concise form. You may wish to provide other examples with headings removed.

Circle Graphs

Point out that not all circle graphs show exact percentages; many show only the relative size of categories.

After completing the exercises, review the uses and limitations of circle graphs before moving to bar graphs.

Bar Graphs

Remind learners that the purpose of the Skill Builders exercise is to produce a rough sketch rather than a perfect graph.

Note that bar graphs may be more complex than those shown in the lesson. If possible, let learners practice interpreting other types of bar graphs. Review the uses and limitations of both bar and circle graphs before moving to line graphs.

Line Graphs

You may want to point out that the numerical and physical distance between values on the vertical axis will affect the graph's appearance. For example, if each line in Example 4 represented 5 degrees instead of 1, the graph would appear flatter.

Review the uses and limitations of each of the three types of graphs before moving to the Check Yourself section.

Skill Builders

On all Skill Builders, emphasize that rough sketches are acceptable, especially for the circle graphs. Graphic accuracy is less important here than understanding how information may be presented.

Lesson 1.7
Working with Tables and Graphs

Learning Objectives

To review the major types of tables and graphs used at work
To practice interpreting the information presented in tables and graphs
To practice constructing tables and graphs to display information

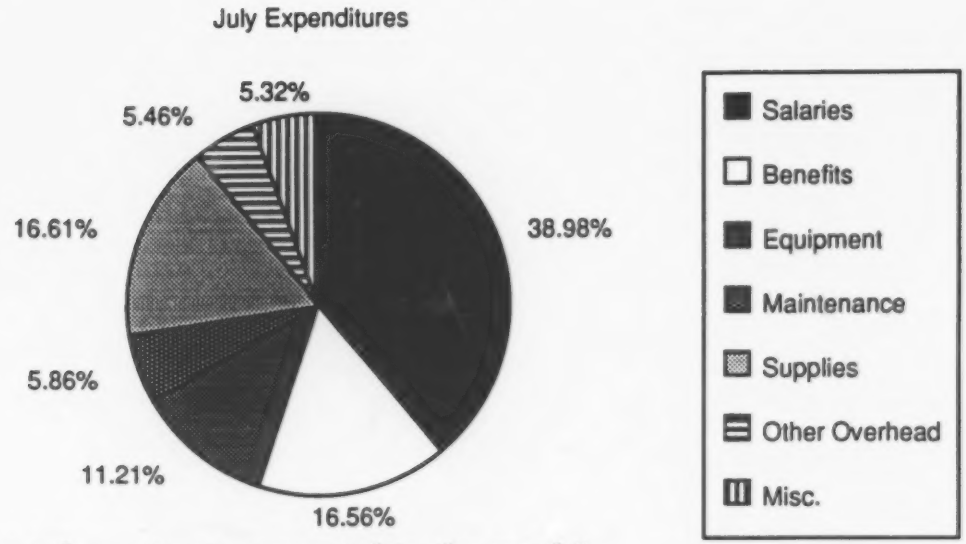
In business, it is often useful to present information graphically in the form of *tables* or *graphs* (also called *charts*). Tables and graphs are useful because they present information visually and make us able to understand important facts without doing much reading. Finding and interpreting information in tables and graphs is a very important job skill in today's workplace. The ability to find the information you need quickly and to interpret it accurately will help you perform your job efficiently.

Vocabulary

table—a display of information that is usually arranged in rows and columns
graph—a picture that displays numerical relationships
chart—a sheet of information in the form of graphs or tables
legend—a table of symbols used for interpreting a graph

Try This

Look at the graph on the next page, and answer the questions that follow.



1. What information is presented in the graph?

   The share of a company's total expenditures for the month of July that went toward each item listed in the graph legend.

2. How might this information be used?

   It might be used to make decisions about cost reductions or to compare with other months' expenditures.

3. State the same information in written form:

   In the month of July, 38.98% of expenditures went to salaries, 16.56% to benefits, 11.21% to equipment costs, 5.86% to maintenance, 16.61% to supplies, 5.46% to other overhead costs, and 5.32% to miscellaneous expenses.

Develop Your Understanding

Tables

Tables are a convenient way to organize information for easy access. Most tables are presented in rows and columns. Row or column headings are

extremely important, as is the title of the table. The table below has no title or column headings:

Example 1

Title of Table: _____

Column heading:	Column heading:
.13 thru .37	.01
.38 " .62	.02
.63 " .87	.03
.88 " 1.12	.04
1.13 " 1.37	.05
1.38 " 1.62	.06
1.63 " 1.87	.07
1.88 " 2.12	.08
2.13 " 2.37	.09
2.38 " 2.62	.10
2.63 " 2.87	.11
2.88 " 3.12	.12
3.13 " 3.37	.13
3.38 " 3.62	.14
3.63 " 3.87	.15
3.88 " 4.12	.16
4.13 " 4.37	.17
4.38 " 4.62	.18
4.63 " 4.87	.19
4.88 " 5.12	.20
5.13 " 5.37	.21

Can you guess what information this table presents without headings?

Tables present important information as briefly as possible. When you look at a table, it is especially important to examine all column or row headings as well as the title of the table. In many cases, it is impossible to understand a table without reading all of the headings and the title.

The table in Example 1 shows how to calculate a 4% sales tax depending on the sale price. In order to use the table, you may want to fill in the words "Amount of Sale" over the left-hand column and "Tax" over the right-hand column. The title of the table is "Sales Tax of 4%."

Skill Builders 1

1. Using the table in Example 1, calculate the total cost of:

   a. a $2.00 item

   $2.08

   b. a $3.65 item

   $3.80

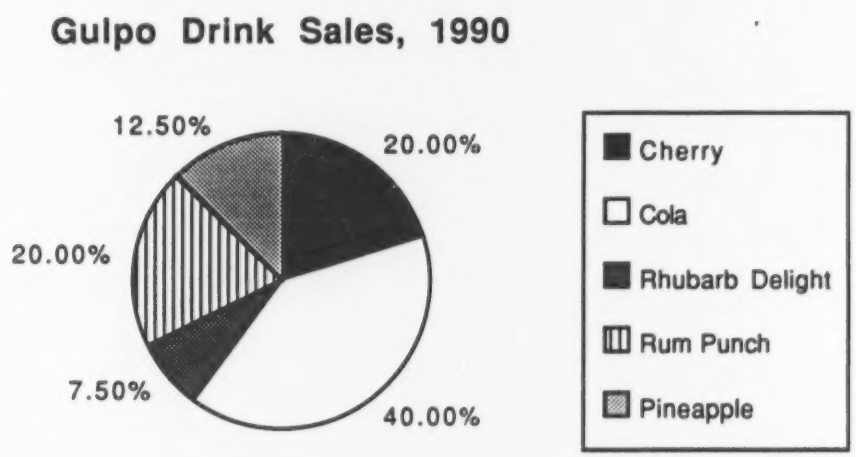
2. Can you find a pattern in the amounts listed in the left-hand column? What would the next row read if the table were continued?

   There is a pattern in the cent values on both upper and lower limits (lower: 13, 38, 63, 88; upper: 12, 37, 62, 87). The next row would read: 5.38 through 5.62 .22

Circle Graphs

Circle graphs or *pie charts* are very useful for illustrating how parts of something relate to the whole. For example, the circle graph in the "Try This" section showed a breakdown of a company's total expenditures for the month of July by category. Circle graphs are often used for this and similar purposes. The circle graph below shows information about soft drink sales for the Gulpo Soft Drink Company in 1990:

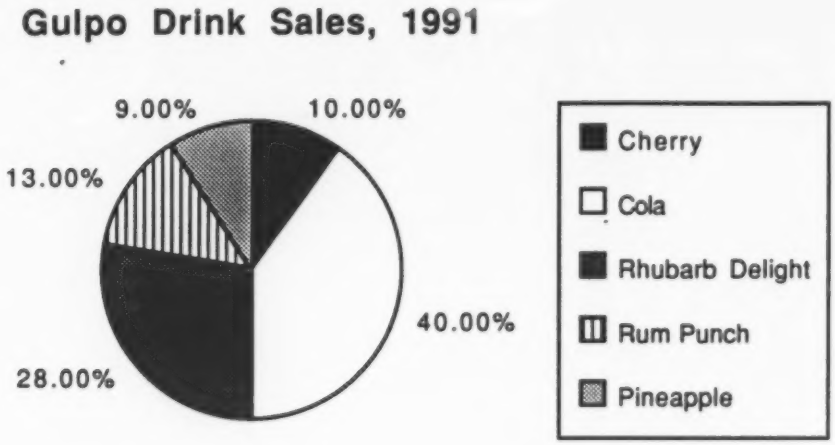
Example 2



Note that the information presented in this circle graph is in percentages of the total drink sales rather than the total number of sales for each kind of drink. We are more concerned here with the amount of each drink sold relative to the other drinks than with the dollar amount of sales.

Skill Builders 2

Compare Gulpo's sales graph for 1991 with the circle graph in Example 2, and answer the questions that follow:



1. Write three comparisons of sales in 1990 and sales in 1991:

   Some possibilities are:
   Cherry sales decreased from 20% to 10% of the total.

   Cola sales remained stable at 40% of the total.

   Rhubarb Delight sales increased from 7.5% to 28% of the total.

   Rum Punch sales decreased from 20% to 13% of the total.

   Pineapple sales decreased slightly from 12.5% to 9% of the total.

2. Which product's sales changed the most between 1990 and 1991?

   Rhubarb Delight

3. True or False: Gulpo sold the same number of colas in 1990 as in 1991.

   This question can't be answered! We don't know how many colas were sold, only what percentage of all drinks sold were colas.

Bar Graphs

Bar graphs are another type of graphic presentation of information for easy comparison. Bars may be either vertical or horizontal, with categories listed on one axis and a scale of values listed on the other. A single bar graph may be used to compare several months or years of data that would require more than one circle graph.

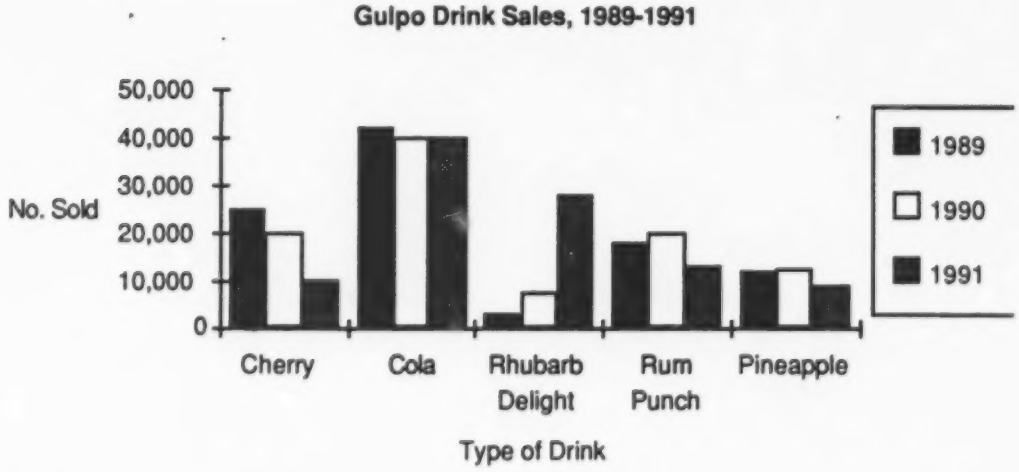
Example 3

The table below was used to compare Gulpo Soft Drink Company's sales of different drink flavors over a three-year period.

Gulpo Drink Sales, 1989-1991

Drink Flavors	**1989**	**1990**	**1991**
Cherry	25,000	20,000	10,000
Cola	42,000	40,000	40,000
Rhubarb Delight	3,000	7,500	28,000
Rum Punch	18,000	20,000	13,000
Pineapple	12,000	12,500	9,000

The table is one way of comparing sales of each type of drink from 1989 to 1991. The bar graph below, however, presents the same information in a way that is easily and quickly understood.



Looking at sales information in this form allows you to quickly find information that might be useful in manufacturing or advertising decisions, such as:

a. What is Gulpo's best-selling soft drink?
b. Which drink's sales increased most in the three-year period?
c. Which drink's sales decreased most during this period?

Skill Builders 3

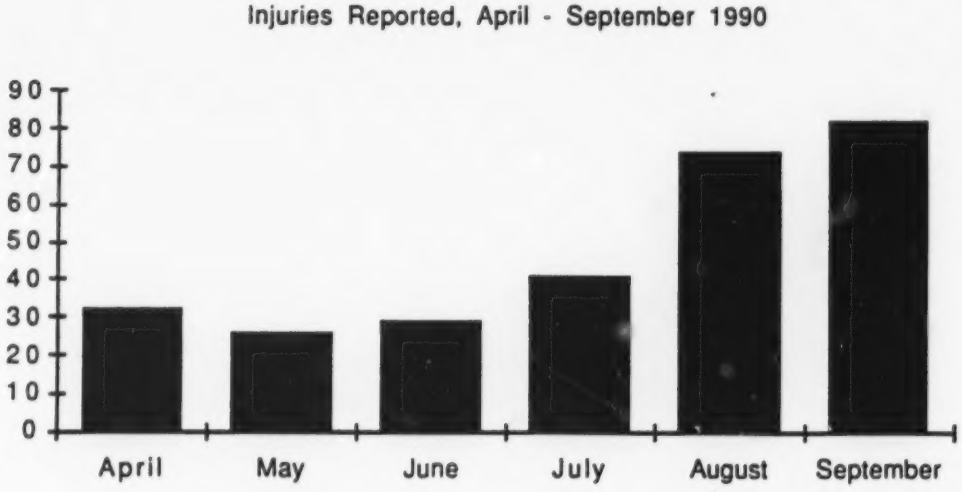
Plink Industries, a company that manufactures electrical circuitry, recently bought some new equipment that has speeded up the manufacturing process. Unfortunately, the equipment has caused a sharp increase in the number of on-the-job injuries at Plink. Plink's safety inspector has put together the table below to show the increase in the number of injuries reported (the new equipment was installed in July 1990):

Month (1990)	Injuries Reported
April	32
May	26
June	29
July	41
August	74
September	82

1. What was the average number of injuries reported for the three months before the new equipment was installed? What was the average number reported for the other three months?

   Before: 29
   After: 66 (65.6)

2. Draw a bar graph showing this information in the space below. Be sure to label both the value axis and the category axis. ***One possibility:***



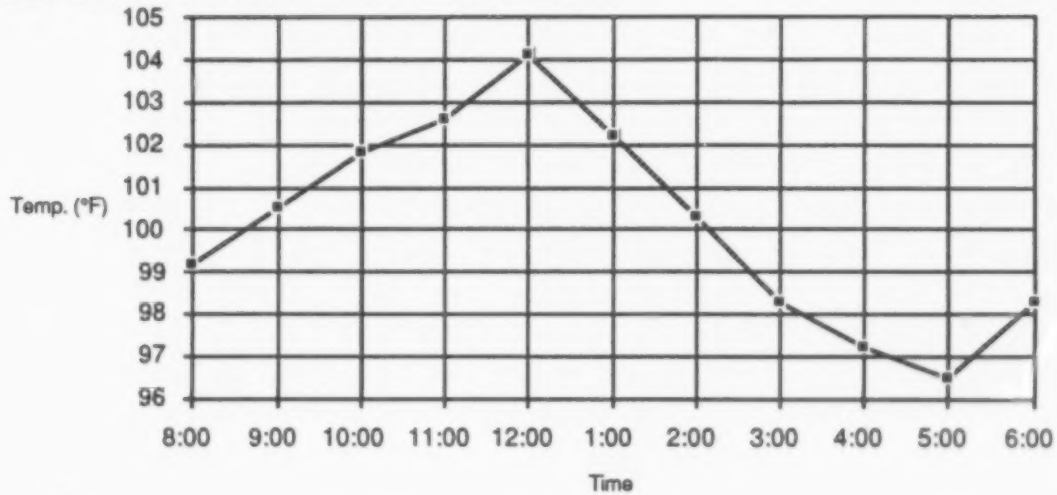
Line Graphs

Line graphs are one of the most effective ways of showing how a chosen value has changed over time. The value is measured at regular intervals and plotted on the graph. Next, a line or curve is used to connect the dots to show how the value moved between measurement periods.

Line graphs are used in systems of Statistical Process Control (SPC) to show when a value is out of control and needs to be corrected.

Example 4

Suppose that the temperature of a certain chemical bath is measured every hour, and that the temperature should be no lower than 98 degrees and no higher than 103 degrees. A line graph of the temperature readings taken between 8 A.M. and 6 P.M. is shown below:



Skill Builders 4

1. *Use Example 4 to do these exercises:*
   a. What were the temperature readings at 11:00 A.M., 1 P.M., and 4 P.M.?

      11:00 A.M., 102.7 ***4:00 P.M., 97.2***
      1:00 P.M., 102.2

   b. Draw lines across the graph to show the upper and lower tolerance limits. How many readings were outside these limits?

      Lines should be drawn at 98 and 103. Three points were outside these limits.

   c. At what time did the temperature trend reverse? What do you think happened at this time?

      The trend reversed after 12:00 noon. Something was done to reduce the temperature of the bath at that point.

Use blank paper or graph paper to create the following charts:

2-5 Various approaches are possible.

2. Make a table showing the information below. Use the clues provided to fill in parts of the table that are not specifically stated.

   It takes 3 hours to get from Boomville to Buston by bus. A one-way bus ticket costs $22.50, and a round-trip bus ticket is $45.00.

   You can get from Boomville to Buston by plane in only 30 minutes. A one-way ticket is $37.50.

   It costs $48.00 to travel round trip from Boomville to Buston by train. A train that leaves at 1:00 P.M. will arrive by 3:00 P.M.

3. Use circle graphs to show this information about a group of new employees:

   Total New Employees: 100
   Sex: Male, 25; Female, 75
   Areas: Manufacturing, 40; Clerical, 20; Administrative, 10; Sales, 30
   Age: 20-30 years old, 30; 31-40 years old, 50; 41-60 years old, 20

4. Use a bar graph to show the information in this table:

Plink Industries Employee Suggestion System
Number of Suggestions Made by Area, 1985-1987

Year	*Manufacturing*	*Clerical*	*Administration*	*Sales*
1985	12	6	3	14
1986	18	8	10	21
1987	25	11	8	27

5. Use the table above, plus the information below, to draw a line graph showing the number of suggestions from the manufacturing area from 1985-1991:

Manufacturing Area	Suggestions Made
1988	22
1989	31
1990	35
1991	40

Check Yourself

For each situation below, what kind of chart would be most effective? Write **T** for table, **C** for circle graph, **B** for bar graph, or **L** for line graph in each blank.

1. ___C___ Your company sells computers. You want to show how big a share of the total computers sold went to each type of computer in 1990.

2. ___L___ You want to show how the number of accidents at your company has fallen over the last 5 years.

3. ___T___ You are trying to decide which paper company to order supplies from in the future. You want to compare the quality, price, variety, and delivery time of four different companies' products.

4. ___B___ You want to compare the monthly production figures of three of your company's plants during the last six months.

MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Analyzing Information (Part 1): Lesson 1.8

This lesson focuses on reading with discernment. It provides practice confirming facts presented in writing, making inferences when reading, and recognizing valid and invalid conclusions.

Today's workplace requires employees to have sound decision-making, troubleshooting, and problem-solving skills. All of these depend on solid analysis of information. The learner will practice verifying facts, making valid inferences, and coming to logical conclusions. Increased awareness of these factors applies to interpersonal relationships as well as to reading. You may wish to open with a discussion of false assumptions and conclusions. Learners may share instances when they have encountered these at work or in reading materials. Point out that learners will need to reexamine how they make decisions and how they are influenced by invalid inferences or conclusions.

Develop Your Understanding

Checking Facts

The goal of this section is to encourage learners to carefully examine what they read and to not just accept it as fact. Slight alterations in wording or reader perception can create entirely different impressions. Point out that this commonly happens when communicating with different people. That is why it is critical to check facts and perceptions during any communication. Ask learners to think of examples and share them.

Inferences

This section deals with the common behavior of "jumping to conclusions." Once again, learners need to think about identifying and focusing on facts rather than opinions or assumptions. Discussion may include the idea of making assumptions about situations, processes, or people, and the need to always verify assumptions before acting on them. Ask learners for applications of this in their work.

Drawing Logical Conclusions

This is similar to the preceding section, but it also examines the factor of premises (i.e., verifying the premise or information that your conclusion is based upon). This follows the premise-information-conclusion format and examines what can happen if any piece of your conclusion process is faulty.

Putting It Together

Encourage learners to be active readers and to examine, question, and verify. Review the importance of constant awareness and thoughtful processing as they read in order to check information and conclusions.

Check Yourself

Ask learners to look for examples this week of erroneous inferences or faulty conclusions. Also, encourage them to monitor their own thinking and reading, examine how they reach conclusions and make decisions, and check what those conclusions and decisions are based upon.

Lesson 1.8
Analyzing Information (Part 1)

Learning Objectives

To practice confirming facts presented in writing
To expand the ability to make inferences when reading
To learn to recognize valid and invalid conclusions

Reading is more than absorbing information. Skillful readers sift what they read, sorting out fact from opinion and drawing their own conclusions. Thoughtful reading can be helpful when you are on the job. For example, if you can identify gaps or unclear parts in a written procedure, you can help the next person who has to follow it. When reading reports or suggestions for solving problems, you can carefully follow the reasoning process to see whether you would come to the same conclusion. In this lesson, you will study facts presented in writing and practice drawing conclusions from them.

Vocabulary

analyze—to examine a piece of writing critically, in order to understand the reasoning process, causes, key factors, etc.
imply—to indicate or suggest something without actually stating it
infer—to use stated information to figure out an unstated message
invalid—based on faulty reasoning; not valid
valid—well-founded or reasonable

Develop Your Understanding

Checking Facts

One of a reader's most important tasks is to understand the facts presented in a piece of writing. This is not always as straightforward as it may appear. Facts can be stated unclearly, or can be overlooked by the reader, especially on first reading. Facts are also subject to different interpretations. Study the fact and the two interpretations below:

> **Fact: Fred Dobbs has 18 months of experience soldering circuits and 3 months as a quality control checker.**
>
> *Interpretation 1:* Fred Dobbs has extensive experience in manufacturing.
>
> *Interpretation 2:* Fred Dobbs has worked in manufacturing for only a short time.

In each interpretation, the facts about Fred's experience have been *restated.* Interpretation 1 puts Fred's experience in a very positive light. Interpretation 2 puts far less value on his experience. You may feel that neither interpretation is quite accurate. Words such as "extensive" or "short time" are not exact and are open to a wide range of interpretations. A more accurate restatement of the facts would be: *Fred Dobbs has worked in manufacturing for slightly under two years.*

The above example illustrates the importance of accuracy in reporting facts. Beware of facts that are restated using words that are not precise.

Skill Builders 1

Read the passage on the next page, and answer the questions that follow it.

Stress Therapy? Fight Back with Feedback

When you are under stress, many parts of your body are affected. Such functions as heart rate, breathing, balance, and eye coordination are all influenced by stress. The result can be serious illness or disease. Most of these functions are controlled automatically by the central nervous system. In other words, you do not consciously cause the changes. But today biofeedback therapy is allowing people to bridge the gap between the body and conscious awareness.

During biofeedback therapy, special electronic equipment is attached by wires to different parts of the body. For example, an *electromyograph* is a machine that monitors the activity of muscles. The patient is able to know what is happening inside the body by observing changes in colored lights or listening to different sounds.

With biofeedback, the patient learns how to control the body's responses. For example, a patient may learn to relax the muscles that tighten and cause a headache. Biofeedback therapy has been used to lower high blood pressure and to control asthma. Thus, biofeedback can help patients learn ways to counteract the effects of stress. With practice, the patient may learn to control the body systems without the need for the electronic equipment.

Questions

1. Circle the letters of *all* statements below that *accurately* restate facts presented in the passage.

   (a.) Stress can affect our breathing.
   b. Biofeedback changes the central nervous system.
   c. All headaches are caused by tight muscles.
   (d.) Biofeedback uses lights or sounds to show changes in the body.
   e. People who use biofeedback have better control over their bodies than people who don't.

2. Which of the following is a fact *supported by the passage*?

   a. Biofeedback is helpful in treating cancer.
   b. People who use biofeedback learn to remain calm all the time.
   (c.) An electromyograph is attached to the body with wires.
   d. Biofeedback has become very popular as a form of therapy.

Inferences

Not all of the information you gain from reading something will be written "in so many words." Some ideas are *implied* rather than spelled out. Look at this example:

Celeste, a supervisor, was interviewing people to fill a position on the plating line. She had just interviewed a young man. Victor saw her and asked how the interview went.

"How did it go?!" she said. "First, he was twenty minutes late. Then, it turned out that he doesn't have any experience. The job requires a year of experience. He was rude and didn't know anything at all about the company. I don't know what he was thinking when he applied for this job."

Celeste didn't say whether the young man got the job or not. But from her comments, you could reasonably *infer* that he didn't. Making an *inference* means using the information you have to understand a message that is implied but not stated directly. For example, the passage on biofeedback in Skill Builders 1 never stated that asthma and high blood pressure can be brought on by stress, but this information can be inferred from a careful reading of the passage.

Making inferences is a reasoning process that people use every day, often without being aware of it. Inferences are only reasonable, however, when they are supported by facts. Sometimes people make great leaps in logic, inferring something that is not really supported by the evidence. This is usually called "jumping to conclusions." In order to make more reasonable inferences, study the evidence carefully, and make sure you have a solid basis for what you infer.

Skill Builders 2

Below are four inferences that are not completely supported by the evidence given. In the column on the right, give another explanation that would fit the evidence. The first one is done for you.

Evidence	Inference	Other Possible Explanation
Frank's manager casually says, "Please come to my office when you have a minute."	Frank thinks he did something wrong.	1. There could be many other reasons why the manager wants to talk to Frank.

Answers will vary. Some possibilities:

Evidence	Inference	Other Possible Explanation
Melinda turned on a machine. Nothing happened. She clicked the on/off switch three times, but the machine did not power up.	She decided the machine was broken.	2. ***Perhaps the machine wasn't plugged in.***
A recently hired temporary worker has a high number of circuit boards that must be reworked.	She's just a temp. She doesn't care about the quality of her work.	3. ***She may not have had enough training, may have trouble understanding the procedure, etc.***
You give a short presentation at a quality meeting. Afterwards, no one asks any questions.	They weren't interested in the presentation.	4. ***They may be just thinking about the presentation and not be ready to ask questions.***

Drawing Logical Conclusions

One way to improve your analytical skills is to look for the reasoning behind statements you hear or read. One common pattern of reasoning can be called ***PIC*** *(premise—information—conclusion):*

- The *premise* is something that you accept as true.
- The *information* is an additional fact.
- The *conclusion* is found by applying the premise to the new information.

If an argument is presented correctly, it should be easy to find the premise, information, and conclusion.

Examples of correct reasoning:

Premise: All workers at UR2 Graphics had a health screening last week.

Information: Roger works at UR2 Graphics.

Conclusion: Roger had a health screening last week.

Premise: Only dangerous acids are kept in the red cabinet.

Information: "Buffo" liquid is kept in the red cabinet.

Conclusion: "Buffo" is a dangerous acid.

The examples above represent valid conclusions based on the premises given. Of course, a conclusion is only as good as the premise that supports it. An *invalid premise* is a statement that is accepted even though it is untrue. "Kids today are all lazy," is a good example of an invalid premise. It may be true that some kids are lazy, but the statement is false if even one kid is not.

A premise is invalid if even ***one*** *exception can be found.*

Another reasoning flaw is the *invalid conclusion.* In this case, the premise may be fine, but the reasoning process that led to the conclusion is not correct.

Example of incorrect reasoning:

Premise: Birds fly.

Information: An airplane flies.

Conclusion: An airplane is a type of bird.

This conclusion is invalid because the premise does not state that ONLY birds fly. Be careful of both the invalid premise and the invalid conclusion when you read.

Skill Builders 3

1. Write a valid conclusion for each item below.

   a. *Premise:* A wrong part was put on all the cards assembled last Friday.

      Information: Card 389XZ2 was assembled last Friday.

Conclusion: ***A wrong part was put on card 389XZ2.***

b. *Premise:* No one in the Sales Department has an engineering degree.

Information: Susan works in the Sales Department.

Conclusion: ***Susan does not have an engineering degree.***

c. *Premise:* Everyone at ABC Computers was paid yesterday.

Information: Keith works at ABC Computers.

Conclusion: ***Keith was paid yesterday.***

2. Each PIC analysis below contains *either* an invalid premise or an invalid conclusion. Mark an "X" beside the part that is invalid in each example.

a. *Premise:* Adults enjoy sports. ***Not all adults enjoy sports.***
Information: Mark is an adult.
Conclusion: Mark enjoys sports.

b. *Premise:* All employees at Plink Industries receive safety training.
Information: Laverne has received safety training.
Conclusion: Laverne works for Plink Industries. ***Premise does not say that only Plink workers had safety training.***

c. *Premise:* People usually look happy when they get a raise.
Information: Ray looks happy.
Conclusion: Ray must have gotten a raise. ***Ray's happy expression may be unrelated to getting a raise. The premise may also be invalid, but is probably acceptable since it contains the word usually.***

3. Write two of your own PIC relationships below. Write in only the premise and the information; have a classmate practice drawing the conclusions.

a. *Premise:* ***Answers will vary.***

Information:

Conclusion:

b. *Premise:* Answers will vary.

Information:

Conclusion:

Putting It Together

In this lesson you have worked with the ideas of checking facts, making inferences, and drawing valid conclusions. You can now begin to apply these ideas by reading critically. Make sure that the facts are clearly explained. If something is unclear, check it instead of guessing. Examine the facts carefully before inferring something from them. Always evaluate the premise of an argument before you accept it. At the same time, make sure that conclusions are based clearly on the facts that are available.

Skill Builders 4

Read the passage that follows, and use it to answer questions 1 and 2.

> According to *USA Today*, remote and lonely stretches of western interstates are the nation's deadliest highways. Analysis of the 92,642 deaths from 82,848 accidents occurring in 1988 and 1989 shows that 89% of these victims died in non-interstate highway accidents. Nonetheless, statistically—in terms of deaths per miles traveled—the chances of being killed on desolate interstates are greater.
>
> Other statistics compiled by the editors range from predictable to surprising. Some 40% of fatal accidents on non-interstate highways involved alcohol. On interstates, that number dropped to 34%. About 82% of accidents occur on straight rather than curved roadways. Only 30% of victims wore a seat belt; 20% of fatal accidents happened on Saturday; 54% occurred after dark. The most encouraging statistic: fatalities in 1989 fell 3.3% from 1988, the first decline in five years.

1. Check the Facts

   For each item, mark "T" for True and "F" for False, *based on the passage.*

   a. ___F___ More people are killed on remote western interstates than on any other kind of road.

   b. ___F___ Most highway deaths involve alcohol.

   c. ___T___ There were more deaths from car accidents in 1988 than in 1989.

2. Inferences

   Place a check before any inferences below that *are supported* by the passage.

   _____ Accidents are most likely on winding, sharply curved roads.

   The first is incorrect, since only 18% of accidents occur on winding roads.

   _____ People are probably more careful about not drinking and driving when they are traveling on an interstate highway.

   The second may be correct, but it cannot be determined from the information in the passage.

   _____ People tend to be more careless on Saturdays.

   The third may be correct, but the passage offers no evidence that the higher incidence of accidents on Saturdays can be attributed to carelessness.

   _____ Accidents are more likely to occur at night.

3. The production manager at ABC Computers discovered a major wiring error that had been made on several expensive computer boards. After tracing the mistake, he found that it must have been the responsibility of either Joe or Sarah. "Joe has worked here for ten years," he thought. "It couldn't have been his mistake. It must have been Sarah's."

   a. Using the *PIC* model, outline the manager's reasoning below:

   Premise: ***People who have been on the job for a long time can't make this kind of mistake.***

   Information: ***Joe has been on the job 10 years.***

   Conclusion: ***This mistake was made by Sarah rather than Joe.***

b. What is wrong with the manager's reasoning? Explain.

Invalid premise. Even a long-term employee can make a mistake, perhaps due to stress, ill health, or some other reason.

Check Yourself

During the next few days, practice reading and listening carefully. Observe your own reactions. What inferences do you make? Do you tend to "jump to conclusions"? Do you recognize reasoning strategies? Any invalid premises or conclusions? Write your notes on this page. Be prepared to discuss your observations with the class.

Notes:

MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Analyzing Information (Part 2): Lesson 1.9

This lesson focuses on identifying cause-and-effect relationships, distinguishing fact from opinion, and recognizing bias in written materials.

This lesson continues the study of analyzing written materials. It delves deeper into the process of analyzation and examines such factors as cause and effect, fact and opinion, and bias. These factors can be difficult to detect but are critical to a decision-making process. One goal of this lesson is to increase the learners' awareness of how they can be affected by propaganda and bias and to improve their ability to detect them. Invite learners to talk about how they usually make decisions or solve problems. Do they check the accuracy of information? Do they guard against acting on opinions rather than facts? How often does bias and propaganda influence what they do?

Develop Your Understanding

Analyzing Cause and Effect

Some cause-and-effect relationships are obvious. Others are less easy to figure out. A key step in the problem-solving process is to determine cause and effect. Several exercises are provided to improve the learner's ability to discern and identify the true cause and effect of a situation or problem. Discuss why it is important to understand the cause-and-effect relationship when engaged in problem solving.

Separating Fact and Opinion

It is critical that learners know the difference between fact and opinion and are able to identify each in reading materials. Ask learners for examples they have encountered where acting on opinion rather than fact can cause, or has caused, problems.

Recognizing Bias

Bias is often difficult to detect and may influence us in ways of which we are unaware. Invite learners to share examples of bias that they have encountered in the workplace. You may also point out that bias is very common in the media and often influences our decisions without our knowing it.

Putting It Together

Encourage learners to analyze events and reading materials this next week. Urge them to be aware of bias and opinion. Ask them to monitor their own decision-making and problem-solving processes and to actively apply what they have learned. At the next class, you might ask them if they had more confidence in their decisions as a result of applying new skills and insights.

Check Yourself

As all of these factors are present in verbal as well as written communication, it is recommended that the learner apply these skills to all areas of communication. Be sure to ask learners during the next class how their skill application worked.

Lesson 1.9
Analyzing Information (Part 2)

Learning Objectives

To identify cause-and-effect relationships in written materials
To distinguish fact from opinion in written materials
To recognize bias in written materials

In the previous lesson, you practiced analyzing reading passages by rechecking facts, making inferences, and studying a typical pattern of reasoning. In this lesson, you will have a chance to study reasoning patterns more deeply. By reading critically, you can learn to spot faulty reasoning and recognize bias. Analytical reading is important at work, especially when you must make a decision based on facts.

Vocabulary

fact—something known to exist or have happened; something that is true
opinion—a personal view or attitude
cause—a person or thing that produces a result
effect—something produced by an agent or a cause
bias—a strong leaning toward a positive or negative view of something

Develop Your Understanding

Analyzing Cause and Effect

One of the relationships that gives meaning to anything you read is that of *cause and effect*. This relationship may either be spelled out for the reader or merely implied. Look at the following example:

HAZCOM CHEMICAL LIST

Chemical Name	Respirator Required	Burns Eyes/Skin	Full Suit Req.	Can Make Poisonous Gases	Can Make Flam. Gases
Sulfuric acid		X			X
Neutraganth A		X			X
Neutraganth B		X			X
Sodium hydroxide		X			X
Hydrogen peroxide		X			X
Etch cleaner HS		X			X
Activator		X			X
Reducer		X			X
Noviganth HC		X			X
Nitric acid	XX	XX	XX	XX	
Sodium persulfate		X			
Cupracid GS leveler		X			X
Cupracid brightener		X			X
Hydrochloric acid		X			X
Potassium thiocyanate					
Ceric sulfate		X			
Starch lub.		X			
E.D.T.A.		X		X	

In this example, the list of chemicals on the left represents *causes*. The possible *effects* of the chemicals are eye and skin burns, poisonous gases, and flammable gases. Also included on the chart are two measures that may be taken to interrupt the relationship between cause and effect: respirators and full suits can be used to protect workers from chemical hazards.

Cause-and-effect relationships can be presented in a variety of ways. Often, the reader must infer the relationship, as in the following example:

> Because we have had a number of accidents in the plant this month, the Safety Office has issued new rules. From now on, no dangling earrings or other loose jewelry may be worn. Also, hair that is longer than shoulder length must be tied back.

At least two cause-and-effect relationships can be inferred from this passage:

Cause	*Effect*
accidents this month	new safety rules
loose jewelry and long hair	at least some of the accidents

Sometimes, the exact relationship between cause and effect will not be immediately clear. One link in the logical chain may be missing. Study this example:

> *"Because I have already taken on several new projects this week, I cannot possibly take responsibility for another one."*

Here, the cause appears to be "taking on several projects" while the effect is "not being able to accept another one." What is the missing link? You can infer that a lack of time is the true reason for not being able to work on another project. This means that there are really two cause/effect relationships:

Cause	*Effect*
taking on several new projects	very busy
very busy	can't accept another project

The order in which cause and effect are presented varies. Sometimes the causes are listed first; in other cases, the effect is followed by a list of causes. There are a number of words and phrases that hint at a cause/effect relationship. Some of these are:

because	due to
as a result	one outcome of
the reason for	by + -ing verb
produce	result in

Although these clues are helpful, they will not always be present. Reading carefully is the best way to recognize all the cause-and-effect relationships that are implied.

Skill Builders 1

Identify any cause-and-effect relationships you infer from each selection below. Be sure to include "missing links."

1. Recently we have had a business downturn. Also, some departments have overspent their travel budget this year. As a result, the company picnic has been canceled.

Cause(s):	Effect(s):
Business downturn/overspending	***Money shortage***
Money shortage	***Picnic canceled***

2. Ever since we hired those three new people in our section, the defect rate has soared. I wonder if they have had enough training.

Cause(s):	Effect(s):
New people	***Increase in defect rate***
Lack of training	***Defects***

Separating Fact and Opinion

Fact can be defined as "something which is true." *True* means "accurate, correct, or conforming to reality." If something is really a fact, it is possible to demonstrate the truth of it so that reasonable people will agree.

An *opinion*, on the other hand, is a viewpoint which is based on personal thoughts, insight, or emotions. By definition, opinions are statements with which it is reasonably possible to disagree.

In some kinds of writing, fact and opinion are woven together. A confusing mixture of the two may be written into the same paragraph, or even the same sentence. As a critical reader, it is part of your task to separate fact from opinion.

Look at the following statement:

The Senator's proposal to draft 10-year-old children was ridiculous.

This statement contains both fact and opinion:
Fact: The Senator proposed drafting 10-year-old children.
Opinion: This proposal was ridiculous.

It is not always easy to recognize an opinion; however, as with cause-and-effect relationships, clues sometimes signal an opinion. Opinions often contain imprecise *adjectives*, or descriptive words. In the example of the Senator, the adjective "ridiculous" is used. This word is imprecise because it is open to widely different interpretations. Other examples of adjectives that signal opinions are *excellent, impractical, interesting, worthwhile,* and *terrible.*

Words that imply judgments are also opinion words. The word "should" is a good indication that the statement is an opinion; so are expressions such as "I think" or "we believe." Be cautious about statements that cannot be proven, either because they relate to the future or to something in the past about which little is known. The statement, "This machine *will never* break down," can only be an opinion, since it cannot be proven either true or false. By contrast, the statement, "This machine *has never* broken down," may be a fact, if evidence supports it.

Skill Builders 2

1. Read the following statements, and check those that are opinions.

_____ A laminate is a composite consisting of a reinforcing material bonded together by an adhesive.
_✓_ Company colors should project a conservative image.
_____ Manufacturing operators receive safety manuals.
_✓_ Operating the cutting machine is an interesting job.
_✓_ People ought to put more of their money into savings.
_____ Some people bicycle to work.

2. Read the passage below, and do the exercise that follows it.

> The business of losing weight can be just that—a business. Sometimes it is a very unethical business.*Many products and methods being sold claim that people can lose weight quickly. But often *these products and methods can harm your health. Smart people know that you should consult a doctor before you begin a weight-loss program.*A doctor can help you plan a safe, effective diet that will help you lose weight and maintain your health.
>
> *Adding exercise to a weight-loss program increases the number of calories your body uses. Exercise has other important benefits. It helps you feel better about yourself, and when you like yourself, you'll want to work hard to be at your best.

a. Go through the passage and underline parts that represent opinions rather than facts.

b. Find three facts in the passage. Mark each one with an asterisk (*).

Recognizing Bias

A third thing to look for when you read is *bias*. Biased writing is not exactly untruthful, but it is often distorted to favor a particular point of view. A writer may be biased either positively or negatively. If the writer is positively biased toward a subject, the subject will be presented in very rosy terms. If the bias is negative, harsh or unfavorable language will be used. Read these two descriptions of the same event:

> *Description 1*
>
> Leadership of ABC Computers was passed to dynamic new CEO Ron Block today. Block, an energetic, youngish man with the courage to try new ideas looked completely in control as he toured the Chicago plant this afternoon. Several workers at the plant expressed optimism about the future.

Description 2

> Ron Block took over as Chairman of a troubled ABC Computers today. Block, trying to appear upbeat despite the deep problems and oceans of red ink that have beset the company, toured its Chicago plant this afternoon. Some employees there expressed doubt that Block truly has the experience to pull the company through difficult times.

Reading these two descriptions, it is difficult to believe that they are talking about the same person. The first has a very favorable bias toward Ron Block; the second has an unfavorable bias. This type of writing shows bias in that facts are carefully selected to support either a positive or a negative impression.

Another type of bias can be recognized in the *blanket statement*. This type of statement groups a large number of people or things into the same category, without exceptions. Some examples of blanket statements are:

> Engineers think they're smarter than anyone else.
> Mechanics are always out to cheat you.
> Books are just a waste of time.
> People are greedy.

If you suspect that something you are reading is heavily biased, you may want to turn to another source for the information. As always, confirm the facts. Try to form your own opinion instead of being strongly influenced by biased writing.

Putting It Together

You now have the basic tools to be a thoughtful, critical reader. It should become a habit to examine what you read, looking for cause-and-effect, fact and opinion, and bias. Ask yourself these questions:

- How accurate are the cause-and-effect relationships that are mentioned?
- Is it doubtful that these causes really produced these effects?
- Are some opinions being presented as facts?
- Do I agree with the opinions that are presented?
- Is there any evidence of bias? If so, how can I get a less biased view?

Skill Builders 3

1. Read the memo below, and do the exercises that follow.

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 12, 1992
TO: All Plant B Employees
FROM: Plant Manager
SUBJECT: Radios

Although it has been a longstanding practice at ABC Computers to allow individual employees to play personal radios during the workday, we will no longer permit this practice.

First of all, we have had a lot of complaints about the choice of music. Busy supervisors have to take time out to settle arguments about what station should be played. Second, employees do not pay careful attention to their work when they listen to the radio at the same time. During the last month alone, we have lost about $45,000 due to careless mistakes. In addition to the safety hazards radios can cause, we also think that not having radios will facilitate more communication about the task at hand.

All radios must be taken home effective today. Thank you for your compliance with the new policy.

PM:ps

a. Identify any cause-and-effect relationships you see in this memo:

The plant manager believes that:

Cause	*Effect*
music choices cause	***supervisor to use time settling arguments***
playing music causes	***mistakes at work***
carelessness caused	***$45,000 to be lost***
music causes	***safety problem***
music causes	***interference with work-related communication***

b. List the facts in the memo:

Complaints have been received.
Supervisors have spent time settling arguments.
$45,000 has been lost in the last month.

c. List any opinions in the memo:

Employees do not pay careful attention to work while listening to the radio. Not having radios will help communication.

d. Is there any evidence of bias in the memo? If so, what?

The writer shows some bias against the use of radios in a willingness to jump to conclusions about their negative effects without acknowledging any positive effects.

e. Critique the reasoning in this memo. Which points are most valid? Which points may be less valid?

Most Valid

The point about complaints and arguments is definitely valid.

Less Valid

The connection between music and careless errors is not validated.

No evidence is given to support the claims that radios are safety hazards or that abolishing them will improve communication.

2. Practice separating fact from opinion, finding cause and effect, and identifying bias with some or all of the following types of reading materials:

   a. an article from your company newsletter
   b. an article from the editorial page of a newspaper
   c. an article from the front page of a newspaper
   d. an advertisement

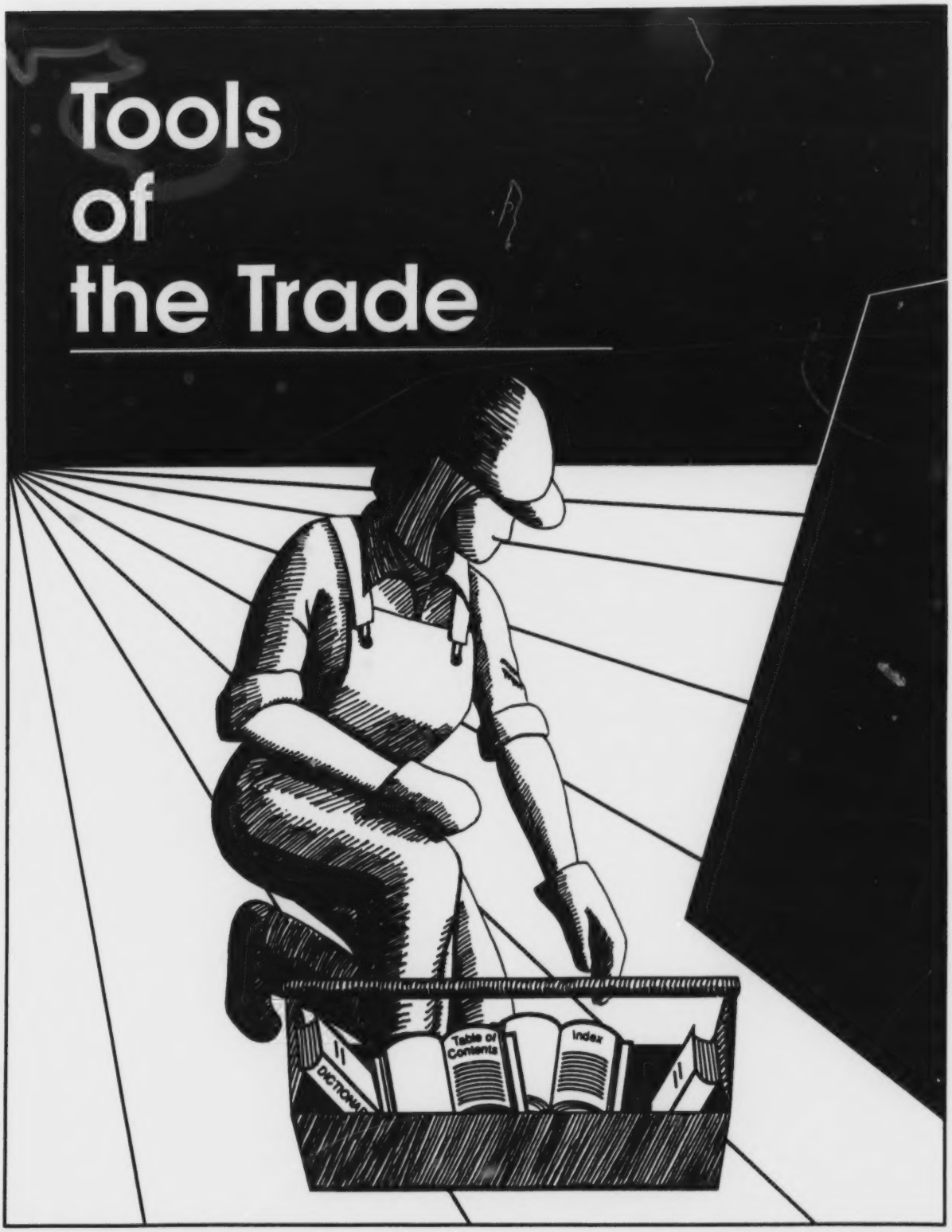
Check Yourself

Now that you have practiced analyzing information in writing, you can do the same thing with verbal information. During the next week, analyze the reasoning in what others say. (You can simply do this for your own information, without criticizing others.) Look for:

- accurate restatements of facts
- valid or invalid inferences
- valid or invalid premises
- valid or invalid conclusions
- valid or invalid cause-and-effect relationships
- fact and opinion
- bias

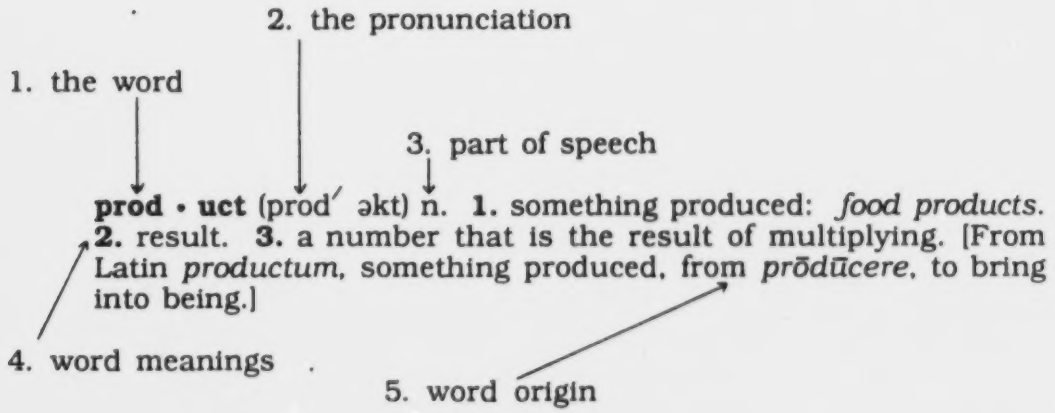
When you have developed your skills in all these areas, you will be able to give valuable constructive criticism. Analyzing information will also help you solve problems and make decisions.

Tools of the Trade



Using the Dictionary

There will be times when you need to look up a word in the dictionary. Here is a quick overview of what you can expect to find in a single dictionary entry.


2. the pronunciation
1. the word
3. part of speech
prod • uct (prod′ əkt) n. **1.** something produced: *food products.* **2.** result. **3.** a number that is the result of multiplying. [From Latin *productum*, something produced, from *prōdūcere*, to bring into being.]
4. word meanings
5. word origin

1. The word is written in boldface. Notice that the word is divided into syllables with a dot separating the syllables.

2. The pronunciation of the word is given next, using the dictionary sound spellings. Accented syllables will be marked. You can usually find the explanation of sound spellings in the opening pages of each dictionary, or at the bottom of the pages.

3. The part of speech will be written as an abbreviation. Parts of speech and their abbreviations are listed below.

n. –	noun
pron. –	pronoun
v. –	verb
v.t. –	transitive verb
v.i. –	intransitive verb
adj. –	adjective
adv. –	adverb
prep. –	preposition
conj. –	conjunction
interj. –	interjection

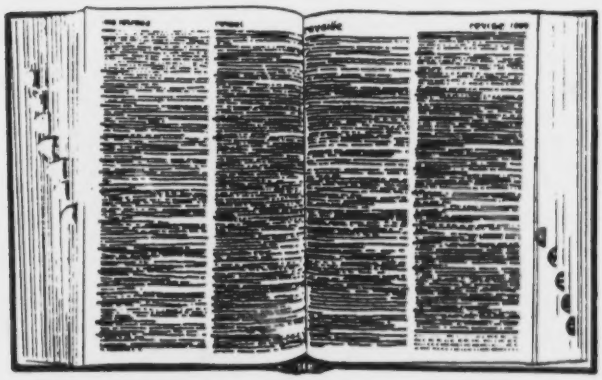
4. The definitions or multiple word meanings come next. The most commonly used part of speech will be listed first. Under each part of speech, definitions are listed from the most to least frequently used.

5. Some dictionaries explain the origins or history of words inside brackets [...].

6. Some dictionaries list other forms of the word. For instance, another form of "product" could be "production."

Guide Words

At the top of a dictionary page you will find two guide words written in boldface. The boldface guide word on the left is the first entry word defined on that page, while the boldface guide word on the right is the last entry word on that page. The two guide words inform you of the alphabetical range of words to be defined on that page.



What If You Can't Find the Word?

If you cannot find the word in the dictionary, it may be that you are misspelling the word. Vowel sounds, as well as consonants, frequently have different spellings. For instance, the long *e* sound can be spelled with *ee* as in tree or *ie* as in piece. The *zh* sound can be spelled with an *s* as in treasure or a *ge* as in garage.

If you are having difficulty finding the word, try substituting a different vowel spelling for the vowel sound. Studying the pronunciation key of dictionaries can help you become aware of the different ways that sounds in the English language can be spelled. This may help find words in the dictionary that you could not locate.

Now Try These

Sound Spelling Practice

Match each word on the left with its correct dictionary sound spelling on the right. Place the letter of the correct sound spelling in the blank next to the word.

d	1. defect	a.	kwol′ ə tē
e	2. education	b.	gāj
a	3. quality	c.	sur′ kit
c	4. circuit	d.	dē′ fekt
b	5. gauge	e.	ej′ə kā′shən

Multiple Meaning Practice

Study the multiple meanings for the word "analyze."

> **an • a • lyze** (an′ əl iz′) v.t. **1.** to separate into component parts, in order to determine the nature or essential features of the whole. **2.** to examine critically or in detail. **3.** to psychoanalyze. **4.** to subject to mathematical or chemical analysis.

Next to each numbered sentence, place the number of the correct definition in the blank.

3 1. The psychologist analyzed the causes of Pat's recent bout with insomnia.
1 2. Jack analyzed the steps in performing his new job duties.
4 3. The engineer will analyze the chemical makeup of the laminating process.
2 4. Gloria analyzes the condition of each book as it comes off the assembly line.

Guide Word Practice

Above the box below, two guide words appear in boldface. Circle all the words in the box that would be included on that page of a dictionary.

Guide Words: **saucepan/saw**

sausage	Saturn	saxophone
saving	savvy	saunter
saturate	satire	savage

Table of Contents

Most books have a **Table of Contents**, which is useful for giving readers a general overview of the book. Before you started reading this book, you probably glanced at the **Contents** page.

The purpose of this activity is to give *practice* in using a **Table of Contents** to locate certain information.

Read the following scenario, refer to the **Table of Contents** provided, and answer the questions that follow.

Lee Wing is a single working mother. Her job as a repair technician has given her confidence in exploring ways to make simple repairs and improvements to her home. She went to the local hardware store, picked up a book, and opened it to the **Table of Contents**. The page from the publication is shown below.

Table of Contents

Part 1	Introduction		
	Chapter 1	Using the Manual	1
	Chapter 2	Safety	5
Part 2	Materials		
	Chapter 1	Wood	7
	Chapter 2	Sheet Metal	9
	Chapter 3	Insulation	12
Part 3	Carpentry and Utility Repairs		
	Chapter 1	Windows, Doors, Roofs	15
	Chapter 2	Concrete, Masonry, and Plumbing	19
	Chapter 3	Heating, Cooling, and Electrical	32
Part 4	Finishing		
	Chapter 1	Hand and Spray	45

Using the **Table of Contents** above, answer the following:

1. How many parts does this book have? 4

2. How many chapters are in this book? 9

3. What page will give you information on Finishing? ___45___

4. In what part of the book would you find information on how to repair a leaky faucet?

   ___Part 3___

5. What would you read about on page 19? ***Concrete, Masonry, and Plumbing***

6. What page would you turn to in order to check your air conditioner? ___32___

7. What part and chapter would give information on proper insulation?

   Chapter 3, Part 2

8. Would this book give you information on termites? Why or why not?

   No, there is no information on termites or insect control.

The Index

The **Index** is usually found at the end of most printed materials with the exception of the newspaper. The **Index** is a list of items in a printed work arranged in alphabetical order according to author, subject, or any key words. This list provides the reader easy access to the information. A building directory is like an **index** to the building. It is usually located in the lobby of any building, and it too lists, in alphabetical order, the people and companies within that building. Whenever you read new material, look at the task as walking into a new building for the first time. Use the **Index** as you would a directory.

Below is an example of an **Index** from a local newspaper.

Index

Bridge	Lifestyle	E20
Crossword	Lifestyle	E21
Deaths	City	B 6
Editorials	Insight	D 2
Entertainment	Show World	F 5
News	Section A	A 1
Sports	Section C	C 2

Using the **Index** above, answer the following questions:

1. In the Insight section, what are you likely to find? ***Editorials*** _____

   _____

2. On which page would you find the obituaries? ***B6*** _____

3. In what section would you find out what movies are showing in your local theater? ***F or Show World*** _____

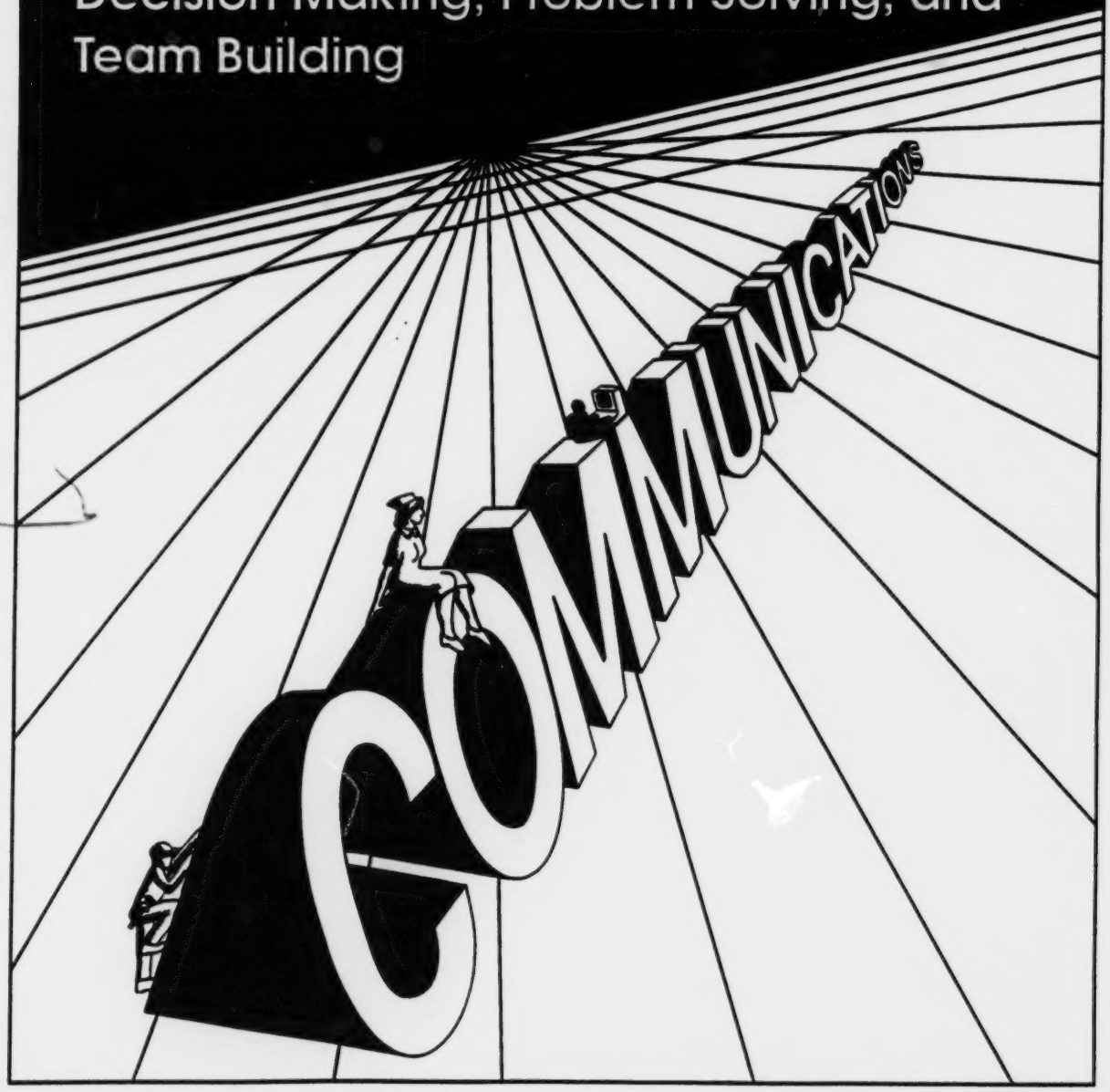
4. What two topics would you find in the Lifestyle section? ***Bridge*** _____ and ***Crossword*** _____

5. Is this Index listed in alphabetical order? ***Yes*** _____

6. Is it arranged according to author, subject, or key words? ***Subject*** _____

Module 2

Decision Making, Problem Solving, and Team Building



MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Thinking Creatively: Lesson 2.1

The focus of this lesson is to have learners experiment with the tools of creativity. Begin the lesson by establishing the value of creative thinking in the workplace, because some learners do not see its importance.

Develop Your Understanding

On the chalkboard, write the sentence stem, "If it weren't for creative thinking, we wouldn't have..." Learners can finish the sentence by volunteering oral responses. Discuss the effects that someone else's creative ideas have had on their work and lives.

Adjust suggested time limits and activities to fit class needs.

Creative Thinking

There are many books and materials available that contrast left and right brain activities. You may want to locate such materials for further discussion.

Conditions for Creativity

The purpose of this activity is for learners to think about their own needs and preferences and to compare them with those of other members of the class. Allow time for silent reflection and group sharing.

Creative Attitudes

Allow time for silent reflection and group sharing.

1. **Brainstorming**
   Post the brainstorming guidelines where they can be seen for quick reference. Some learners will find it easy to brainstorm and to suspend judgment. Others will struggle and demonstrate rigid thinking. Continue to encourage and reward all ideas.

2. **Question Checklist**
   Explain to the learners that these are only sample questions. A question checklist should contain questions that encourage creative thinking for a specific need or task. For additional practice, learners can modify other processes and products using a question checklist.

3. **Visual Brainstorming**
   This may work better with some learners if you direct the whole class in one visual brainstorming before learners practice independently.

Check Yourself

These are extra creativity-building activities for learners who desire more practice. You may use these or make up some of your own.

Lesson 2.1
Thinking Creatively

Learning Objective

To experiment with creative thinking

When work teams solve problems, they are seeking new, more effective results. Something about the old way is not working. Team members need to think creatively to find new solutions. This lesson will focus on attitudes and tools that can help you respond creatively to solving problems.

Develop Your Understanding

Creative Thinking

Effective problem solving and decision making cannot be done with the analytical and logical left brain alone. The right side of the brain provides its imaginative and intuitive abilities. It takes the two sides of the brain in cooperation to help you make creative choices.

Conditions for Creativity

Do you know the conditions that promote your creative abilities? Read the list below. Choose the ones that are more likely to encourage your own creative abilities.

- Working alone or in a group
- Working under relaxed or pressured conditions
- Working in a cooperative or competitive effort
- Working with infrequent or frequent supervision
- Working within a deadline or without a deadline
- Working with ideas, with things, or with people

When are you most creative? Take a few moments to reflect on a time when

you were truly creative. Mentally answer the questions below. Next, contrast that experience with a memory of when your creativity did not flow freely.

- What were you doing?
- Who were you with?
- Where were you?
- When did this happen?
- How did you feel? (emotions)
- Why do you think you felt so creative or uncreative?

To increase your creativity it is important to provide supportive conditions.

Creative Attitudes

Here is a list of attitudes that some people believe encourage creativity. Do you agree with them?

- Being open to unusual ideas and experiences
- Being willing to play around with ideas
- Being willing to suspend judgment and criticism
- Being aware of your emotions and five senses
- Being in a relaxed environment
- Feeling safe emotionally

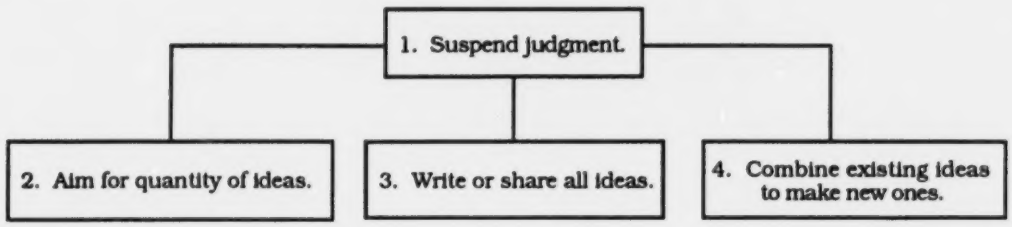
Which one of the above is the most important to you? Which one of the above is the least important to you? Share your ideas with your classmates.

Tools of Creativity

1. Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a tool used to promote the birth of many ideas. When you are making a decision, it can be beneficial to look at multiple ideas and solutions before choosing one. Brainstorming is a good way to practice creative attitudes if you follow the recommended guidelines.

Guidelines for Brainstorming



Skill Builders 1

Activity 1

1. List as many uses for an old automobile tire as you can. You have 3 minutes to brainstorm.

   Answers will vary.

2. Next, you and your classmates can share your ideas with your instructor. Remember there is no judging at this time. Judgment is important later in the decision-making process.

3. Now that everyone has shared ideas, try to list some new uses by combining ideas to make new ones. Brainstorm for another 3 minutes.

   Answers will vary.

4. Share any new ideas with the class. Did combining ideas enhance your creativity?

Activity 2

Brainstorm responses for each of the following questions. Allow yourself 3-5 minutes for each question.

1. What are some of the changes in your company that have evolved since you became employed here? Silently list your responses, and then share them with the class.

   Answers will vary.

2. Now, brainstorm possible changes that could take place in the future of this company. Do not judge your ideas. Be serious or have fun with your ideas. You can use the categories below to help you. Share your responses, and combine ideas to make new ones.

   Categories for change:

Product	Building Site	Employment	Benefits
Process	Work Area	Management	Work Schedule
Training	Parking Space	Security	Dress

   Answers will vary.

Activity 3

Make a list of the most useless inventions in the world. Exchange ideas with your classmates.

Answers will vary.

2. Question Checklist

"How can this product be made better?" "How can this process be improved?" Asking questions that spark innovative solutions is one of the most natural tools for creativity. You can develop a question checklist made specifically for your work situation. Here is a checklist with sample questions.

Sample Questions

1. What can be added or combined?
2. What can be rearranged or reversed?
3. What can be made larger or smaller?
4. What can be substituted?
5. What can be omitted?

Skill Builders 2

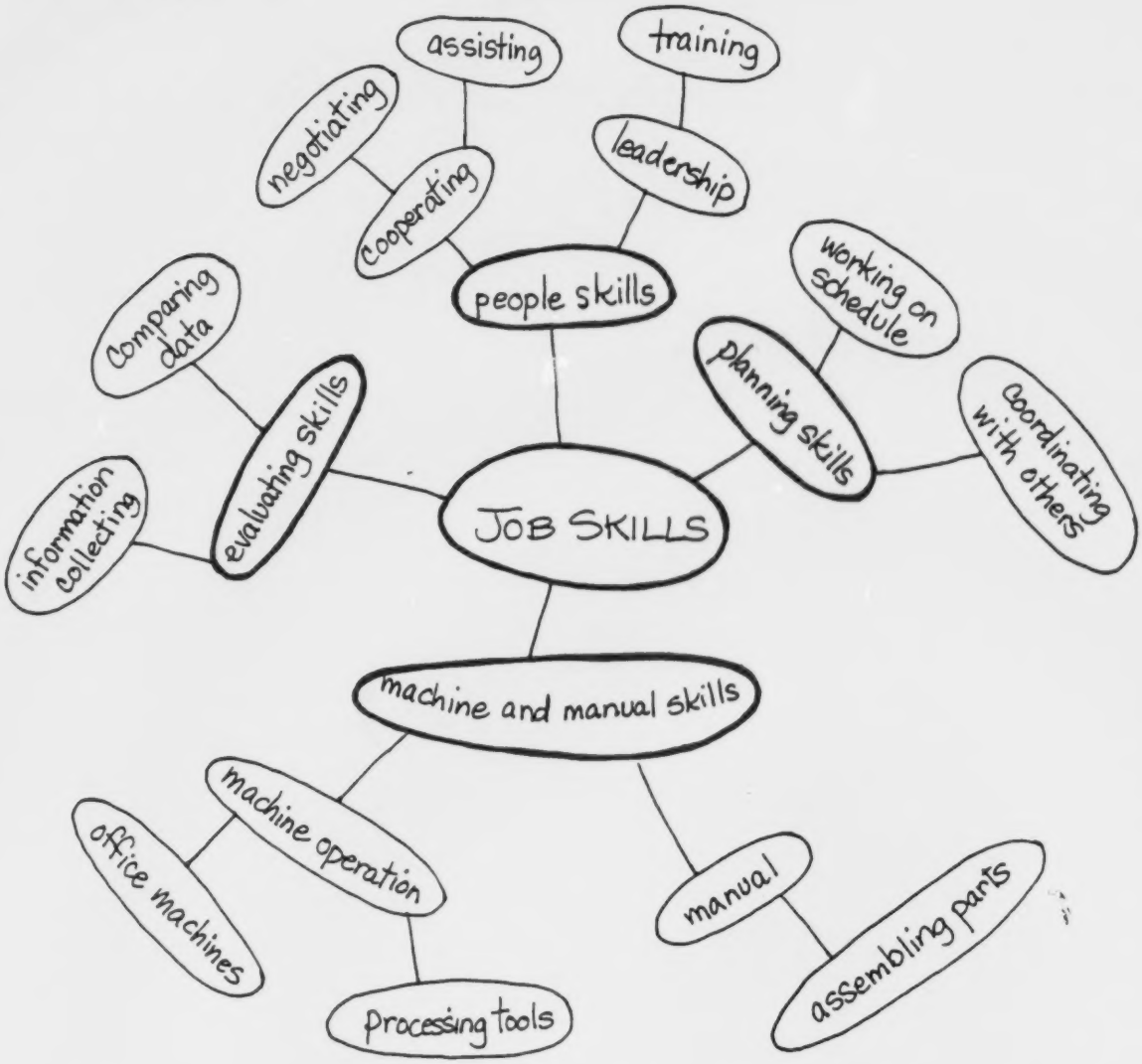
Activity 4

Imagine that your class is a designing team that makes automobiles. Your customers are looking for unique, safer, or cost-saving features. Using the *question checklist*, list possible options your clients can select. Your instructor will set a time limit. Be sure to share ideas to combine old ideas so that you can create new ones.

Answers will vary.

3. Visual Brainstorming

Some people find that visual brainstorming works better for them than listing. Start with a main idea or topic in the center of the page, and draw a circle around it. Then draw lines away from the center circle to make subtopics. Each time you make a new subtopic, draw a circle around it. You can continue to branch off from the main topic into subtopics and branch off the subtopics into smaller topics. Look at the example below showing you someone's job skills.



Your main topic may not always fall neatly into clear subtopics. Don't worry. Just keep brainstorming ideas branching off from the center circle. The important thing is that you are producing ideas.

Skill Builders 3

Activity 5

Choose one of the ideas below to visually brainstorm. Write your main topic in the center circle, and then branch off into subtopics.

1. Plan a workplace party with food, entertainment, theme, guests, and anything else you want.

2. Pretend that you have just inherited one million dollars. Make a plan for all the ways you will spend your money. What trips will you take? What will you buy? What will you give your relatives? What investments will you make?

3. Draw a visual brainstorm of your own job skills similar to the example.

Answers will vary.

Check Yourself

Choose any of the following activities to practice using your creative thinking.

Answers will vary.

1. Imagine that you are writing your life story at age 75. Write the title of your autobiography. Be serious or humorous.

2. Think of a recent difficulty in your job. Use your creative thinking to list all of the reasons why this was a positive experience for you.

3. List as many ways as you can to explain how any of the following paired words are similar.
   a rose and a baby
   a sidewalk and a heart
   a marriage and a baseball game

4. What would be more useful if it were silent?

5. Using the question checklist, design a new tennis shoe.

6. Fill in the missing blanks with your own ideas. Write down whatever pops into your thoughts.

   What if a car had wheels like a _____?

   What if grass had blades like a _____?

   What if paper had a texture like a _____?

   What if a telephone made a ringing sound like a _____?

7. Make up your own brainstorming topics by completing the questions below. Then brainstorm your responses.

   a. What are the reasons for _____?

   b. What are the components of _____?

   c. What are the purposes of _____?

   d. What are the choices for _____?

MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Thinking Things Through: Lesson 2.2

The purpose of this lesson is to encourage learners to look beyond the obvious when making suggestions at work. It is the practical side of creativity. Some learners may object that considering such issues is more properly a manager's job. This attitude is outmoded in view of the increasing amount of input required of workers at all levels in many companies. You may want to point out that managers are likely to respect suggestions that demonstrate an understanding of the larger issues faced by the company.

Develop Your Understanding

One way to introduce this section would be to have a discussion about the tendency of some workers to get frustrated about the pace of change at work or the lack of interest in ideas they present. The class can discuss why some ideas are well received and others are not. This discussion can be picked up and expanded on at different points during the lesson.

Case Study 1

Have learners read the case silently to themselves or you read it aloud as they follow along. Discussion can be conducted with the class as a whole, in pairs, or in small groups. Learners may have similar stories to relate.

Using Visual Brainstorming to Map Your Ideas

Some learners may have trouble getting started. Working in pairs or small groups to generate a map is also an option. Afterwards, maps can be made into transparencies, photocopied, or displayed on the board for comparison.

Identifying Benefits and Concerns

Some learners may not have seen the term "party" in this context before. You may want to have the class discuss their perceptions of the accuracy of the chart in Case Study 2.

Skill Builders

Allow at least 10 minutes for Skill Builders 2, Exercise C, if you decide to do it. Have the class compare their charts in groups or pairs.

Case Study 3

Possible responses: Gary could have found out what other companies make forms and given cost estimates to the supervisor; or, he simply could have ordered the forms from another company; or, he could have made sure the supervisor was informed of the problem promptly. Learners' answers may depend upon the degree of autonomy expected in their own departments.

Check Yourself

This can be either a serious or a fun activity, depending on the group.

Lesson 2.2
Thinking Things Through

Learning Objective

To practice global thinking

In the past, doing a job was often a very limited activity. People did their own jobs with little knowledge of how other departments in the company functioned. In today's workplace, however, this approach is disappearing. Employers want workers to understand more about the company as a whole, as well as how their own work contributes to the products or services the company offers. Learning to think globally—to "see the big picture"—can help you become more effective in today's changing workplace.

Develop Your Understanding

In the previous lesson, you experimented with tools to tap your creative thinking processes. You may wonder how to translate your good ideas into action.

Suppose you have an idea for making a change at work. It may be that you see a problem that needs to be corrected, or that you have an idea that will improve quality. You may have suggestions that would save the company money or would improve the "quality of life" at work.

Once you have an idea, you will need to think about how to present it so that your suggestion will have an impact. Keep in mind that any change you suggest is likely to have more than one effect. Your suggestion is also likely to raise many questions or problems. If you have answers to the questions and have thought about the problems, your idea has a better chance of being accepted.

Case Study 1

Read the following case study. As you read, focus on these questions: What mistakes did Ray make? What would you do differently in his position?

A "Simple Solution"

Ray was the first-shift supervisor of the card repair section at a computer manufacturing company. The plant operated on two shifts, from 7 A.M. to 3 P.M. and from 3 P.M. to 11 P.M. Several members of Ray's staff worked a flextime schedule, coming in at 6 A.M. and leaving at 2 P.M., instead of the normal 7 to 3 schedule. Some of these early birds complained that the noise level between 6 A.M. and 7 A.M. interfered with their work. The noise was caused by a cleaning crew that came in to wash and buff the floor each day.

The solution seemed simple. Ray approached the supervisor of the cleaning crew and told her that, from now on, the crew should clean the area at 5:30 A.M. instead of 6:00.

Later that day, Ray's manager called him into her office. She was very angry. She pointed out that the cleaning crew had a contract to begin work at 6 A.M., when the first managers arrived in the morning. The custodians were not company employees, and did not have security clearance to enter the plant when no managers were present. In addition, Ray had no authority to change the work schedule of the cleaning crew, which was set by a contract. Ray began to realize that the "simple solution" he had suggested was really far from simple.

Discussion

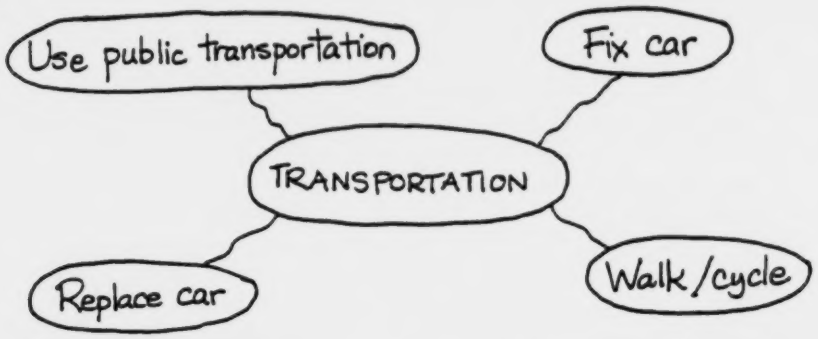
1. What would be the total impact of Ray's suggestion? Consider the effect on everyone concerned, including the contract workers and their families, the managers at the plant, possible cost increases, and anything else that might be affected.
2. How could Ray have avoided his mistake?
3. Suggest other solutions to Ray's problem.

Using Visual Brainstorming to Map Your Ideas

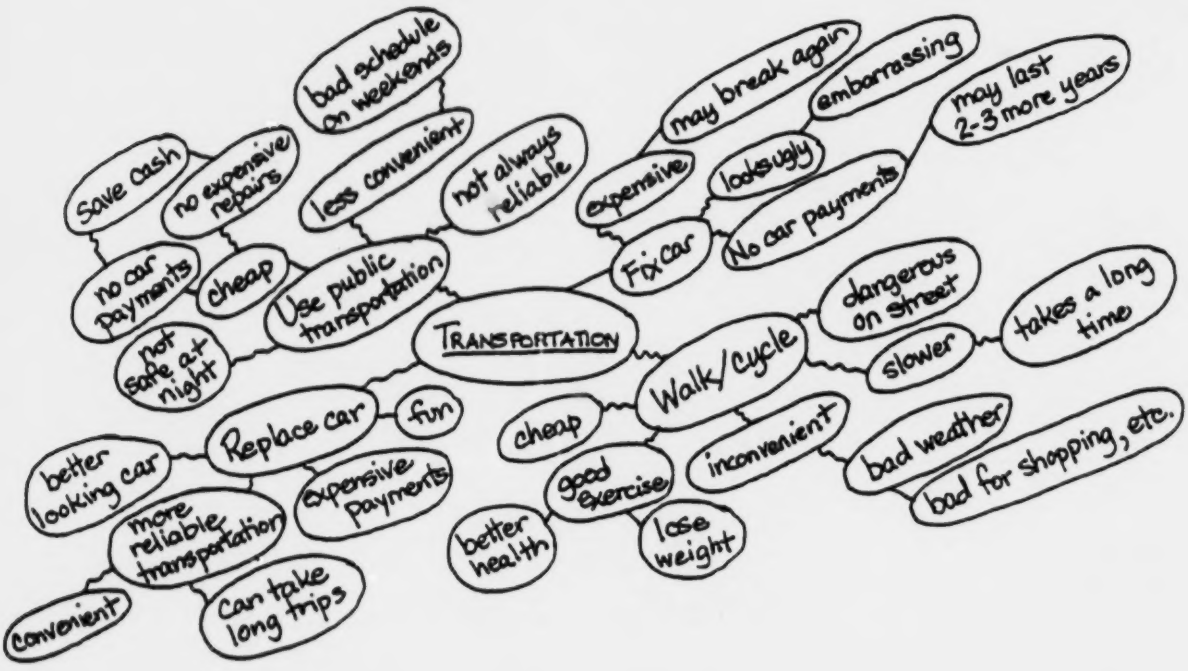
In the case study above, you examined how Ray's failure to look at all the facts and consequences of a solution resulted in a bad decision on his part. When told about a problem, Ray naturally saw the problem mostly from his own point of view. He didn't stop to think about the impact his suggestion might have on other people or operations within the company.

One way to look at a situation from many points of view is to use the idea of *visual brainstorming* you practiced in the previous lesson. Remember, brainstorming is not a formal process, but rather a way to let your thoughts flow on paper. In this way, you can create a "map" of your ideas. You may choose to start small, writing down the first things that come to your mind, and then expand out to include many other considerations or points of view.

For example, suppose your car breaks down and will require extensive repair. You may immediately think of two options: fix it or replace it. Once these ideas are on paper, you may think of others: perhaps you can use public transportation for a while, or ride a bicycle. Your beginning map may look like this:



Once you have these four options down, you may want to map the advantages and disadvantages of each one. Your expanded map may look like this:



Next, you might choose one idea and develop that one. If you decide to replace the car, you will have many decisions to make. Will you buy a new car, buy a used car, or lease a car? Will you need to take out a loan? How much money can you afford to spend? What kind of a car will meet your needs? All of these questions must be answered before you can replace the car. A map can help you get an overview of the situation.

Skill Builders 1

Choose one of the following ideas, and use the space below to complete a visual brainstorming map. You will have 5 minutes to work on your map. Afterwards, compare your map with a partner or small group to see if you can gain more ideas.

Answers will vary.

a. Map the process of *replacing* your car, including steps such as pricing cars, asking friends, visiting dealers, etc.
b. Map the process in doing your job everyday.
c. Choose another process, and map it.

Identifying Benefits and Concerns

Whenever you have an idea or suggestion, it's important to look at the issue from more than one angle. In most cases, making changes will affect more than one individual, team, or department. Sometimes different areas within a company have competing or conflicting needs. It's best not to solve one headache by creating another.

When you propose a new idea at work, it helps to think about how implementing the idea will affect different people or groups within the company.

Case Study 2

> At ABC Computer's production plant, all machines are shut down 10 minutes before the end of each shift and started up again at the beginning of the next shift. Shutting down the machines each time is very costly. The plant's manufacturing engineers want to save money by requiring operators to leave the machines on during shift changes. The operators are against this idea, because it would mean fewer inspections and maintenance checks. They point out that they are responsible for maintaining their own machines, which are inspected between shifts. If the machines are not shut down, the operators are afraid that they may be blamed for another operator's carelessness. The plant manager likes the idea of reducing costs, but the floor supervisors are more interested in continuing the inspections and tracing individual responsibility for machine failure.

Each party involved in this situation has his/her own concerns about the idea of keeping the machines on between shifts. It may be helpful to write down the benefits and concerns about the idea from each party's point of view:

Party	*Benefits*	*Concerns*
Engineers	Save money Efficient Increase productivity	
Managers	Save money Increase productivity	Respond to needs of floor supervisors
Floor Supervisors	Increase productivity	Hard to trace individual responsibility Respond to needs of operators
Operators		Don't want to be held responsible for others' poor performance Few chances to maintain machines

Once you see the situation from the point of view of the benefits and concerns for each of the parties involved, you can go about finding answers and creative solutions to the concerns.

Skill Builders 2

Sharon has been a quality control supervisor for a printing company for 5 years and has done an excellent job. She is considering applying for an opening in the company's training department, which would mean a 20% increase in pay but would also involve more overtime and increased responsibility. Sharon's supervisor is worried that he will not be able to find a good replacement for her, but the training manager is eager to have Sharon in her department.

a. What might happen if Sharon takes the new position? Fill in the benefits/concerns chart below: ***Answers will vary.***

Party	*Benefits*	*Concerns*
Sharon		
Sharon's supervisor		
Training department manager		
Sharon's co-workers		
Others		

("Others" may include Sharon's family, the plant manager, or anyone else who might have a stake in Sharon's decision.)

b. How might Sharon or the other parties address some of the concerns you listed? ***Answers will vary.***

c. Have you ever considered applying for a different type of job within your company? Try a benefits/concerns chart or an idea map to look at this option, then discuss it with a partner or a small group. ***Answers will vary.***

Following Through

When you have a task to do at work, you often have a choice. You may define the task in a very limited way, or you may look beyond the task and find the next step before you are asked.

Case Study 3

> Gary's supervisor discovered that the department had run out of receipt forms. Since he was busy, he told Gary to order more. Gary called the company that made the receipt forms and found that the company had gone out of business. He left his supervisor a note saying that it was not possible for him to order more forms. The supervisor felt annoyed because a day had gone by since he asked Gary to order the forms and he still had no forms.

Discussion

What additional steps could Gary have taken to help solve the problem?

Following through is often as simple as asking yourself, "What do we need to do next?" This may require a shift in focus. Instead of seeing yourself as a person who takes orders, you may choose to see yourself as a member of a team that is responsible for getting a job done. This type of focus makes a job more interesting, since everyone is involved in finding solutions to problems and in helping the group succeed. While the final decision on many topics will probably be made by your supervisor or manager, you can help by doing research, making suggestions, and anticipating questions.

Skill Builders 3

For each of the following situations, discuss ways to follow through on the task.

a. Roger was assembling parts for computer boards one day when he discovered that the part number label on a bin did not match the numbers on the parts inside the bin. He put the parts back, found parts with the correct part number, and used those for the rest of the day. *What else should Roger have done?*

b. Annette was getting ready to send thirty boxes of books out by parcel post. The books were supposed to be boxed in lots of six. One of the boxes fell open by accident. Annette discovered that there were only five books inside. She got another book from a stack, put it in the box, and sealed it, then sent all the boxes out. *What else could Annette have done?*

c. The employees in a card assembly section received blueprints for a new product that were very difficult to read. When the cards were assembled, an unusually high defect rate was found. The assemblers blamed this on the blueprints, but some managers thought that employee carelessness was the problem. *What could the assemblers do other than complain again?*

d. Chuck worked in the records department at a medium-sized company. One day he saw a demonstration of a new filing system that would be faster and more efficient. He told his boss all about the system, but he had forgotten the name and where he had seen it. The boss shrugged and said it sounded good, but he didn't have enough information. "He never wants to try anything new," Chuck thought. *What could Chuck do to convince his boss to reconsider?*

Check Yourself

Try this as an individual or group activity.

Choose a situation at work, at home, or in the community that you would like to change.

1. Spend 5-10 minutes making a visual brainstorming map about ways to change the situation.

2. Make a chart identifying the parties involved in making a change, and list benefits and concerns for each party. List or discuss possible responses to the concerns you identify.

3. Decide what you would do to follow through on winning acceptance for your idea..

MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Team Building: Lesson 2.3

The focus of this lesson is to examine individual and group behavior in building an effective team.

Develop Your Understanding

Team Roles

Emphasize that these are not assigned roles, but roles that occur naturally. Explain that one member may perform several roles within the group. Have learners describe roles that they have observed that are not listed here.

Skill Builders 1

Some classes may enjoy reading this script aloud. Assign characters, and encourage learners to role-play.

On-Track and Off-Track Behaviors

Have learners think of harmful and beneficial examples of off-track behaviors. Encourage learners to discuss experiences that they have had with these behaviors.

Personality Traits of Team Members

You may want to locate a list of personality traits, or make up one of your own. There are personality tests that can be given if you want learners to do an accurate analysis of themselves. Refer to your memo for Lesson 2.4.

Skill Builders 3

Make sure that you stress to learners that none of the groups are better or worse than the others. Allow learners to interpret the personality traits from their own perspectives. Encourage learners to discuss their choices and their reasons.

Skill Builders 4

Encourage learners to use visual aids. If equipment is available, learners can videotape their commercial.

Lesson 2.3
Team Building

Learning Objective

To examine individual and group behavior in building an effective team

Your individual success in the workplace is determined to a great extent by your ability to get along with others, and your company's success is determined by you working as part of a productive team. Gaining insight into the dynamics of individual and group behavior can make you a more effective team member.

Develop Your Understanding

Industry has a vital interest in learning how people can best work together because this influences productivity. If employees work well together, job productivity increases.

Within the workplace, task-teams function to solve problems and complete tasks. When you perform as a team member, you may have noticed that you act with certain predictable behaviors. You may have also observed that other group members behave in predictable ways. Taking on unassigned roles within the team is a natural process in building a team. Study the team roles listed below. Do you see yourself or someone you work with?

Team Roles

1. **Sage**—This participant acts as an expert on the situation. When this person is knowledgeable, his contributions can be valuable. The team respects his authority. However, when this person does not have knowledge, contributions can be perceived as a desire to dominate.

2. **Mediator**—This member wants everyone to get along. Her efforts to restore balance when conflict arises can be beneficial. She attempts to

encourage all points of view and to look for a compromise when conflict arises. She may be so concerned with others that she offers few ideas to the group.

3. **Comic**—He acts to relieve tension. He can find humor and take the drudgery out of work. At times, he may get the team off-task, and detract from its focus.

4. **Task-Minder**—She orients the group to the task at hand. When members begin to lose focus, she can help them get back on target. The drawback to this role is that she may inhibit some of the pleasures of teamwork by discouraging fun and fellowship.

5. **Protester**—He challenges ideas, pointing out weaknesses in others' suggestions. He encourages the team to be analytical and to consider all options. Sometimes his arguments block the group's harmony and its ability to complete its task.

6. **Spectator**—She observes the group for long periods of time before offering her perspective. She may listen and consider all the ideas before she makes her contribution. Her thoughts may be valuable. Sometimes she remains a nonparticipant and does not offer input to the process.

7. **Investigator**—He may ask questions to seek information and opinions from others. By doing this, he may encourage everyone to participate and be a part of the decision. Sometimes, he may continue casting about for information for a long period of time, keeping the team from moving on to the next step in the process.

8. **Inspirer**—He motivates others, bringing a positive attitude to the team. Sometimes he may spend too much time being a cheerleader, and may irritate other members who want to get on with the task.

9. **Analyst**—The analyst is an intellectual who helps the others see how their suggestions fit into the philosophy of the group and its goal. She could analyze so much that the group digresses from its task.

10. **Rapport-Builder**—He socializes and brings the interpersonal touch to the group, helping to build unity. At times, his behavior gets the group off-task.

11. **Attention-Getter**—She manipulates the group to meet her own need for getting recognition. She steals attention from other members and from the task. However, sometimes her behavior reminds others that individuals need to be recognized. If each member gets attention from time to time, members' motivation may be increased.

12. **Digressor**—She elaborates on topics that slow down the decision

making. There can be a benefit to the group if the digression builds rapport and motivation.

Skill Builders 1

Imagine that the dialogue below comes from a team meeting. Read the script silently or aloud. Which role or roles do you see each participant playing? Which roles are in conflict with each other? Discuss. ***Answers will vary.***

John, Jeff, and Sue are working as a task-team. They are supposed to conduct a survey of their co-workers to find out how many of them would prefer to work fewer hours, but with an increase in hourly wages. With this new proposal, employees would not receive benefits. The old way had employees working full time with benefits. Let's eavesdrop on the meeting already in progress. ***Answers will vary.***

Script: ***Possible answers include:***

1. **John:** "I don't understand why we are even running this survey. Nobody is going to volunteer to work without benefits." ***Protestor***
2. **Jeff:** "Maybe, but we have a job to do. Let's go ahead and assign responsibilities. Sue, you are to be in charge of writing the survey questions. John, you need to see to the printing, and I'll make sure that everyone gets a copy." ***Task-minder***
3. **Sue:** "Oh, I think it'll be fun to see what results we get!" ***Inspirer***
4. **John:** "Wait a minute! We all need input on how the questions are to be written. You can't have just one person write the questions." ***Protestor***
5. **Jeff:** "Listen, they've given us five working hours to complete the survey. I think we need to get on with it. What do you think, Sue?" ***Task-minder***
6. **Sue:** "Well, maybe it would be helpful to me to hear what you both think should go into the survey. I'll ask our supervisor for an extension of one hour for this project. Okay?" ***Mediator***
7. **John:** "They're not going to let us do that. You are just wasting your breath. Did I tell you what happened last year when I served as Safety Week sponsor. I was having this problem . . . " ***Protestor, Digressor, Attention-getter***
8. **Jeff:** "I hate to cut you off, but I just thought of other responsibilities we need to assign. We need to tally the results, put them in a memo, and then present them at our next department meeting. Any preferences?" ***Task-minder***

9. **Sue:** "I'll tally the results." ***Task-minder***

10. **Jeff:** "Since I've done most of the background research on this proposal, I think I should be the one to present it." ***Sage, Task-minder, Attention-getter***

11. **John:** "I think we need to really be careful how we present this. Have you guys thought about the implications of this proposal? I really think we need to write that survey with diplomacy." ***Analyst***

12. **Sue:** "I think we should listen to your concerns. That's another reason for us to ask for an extension." ***Mediator***

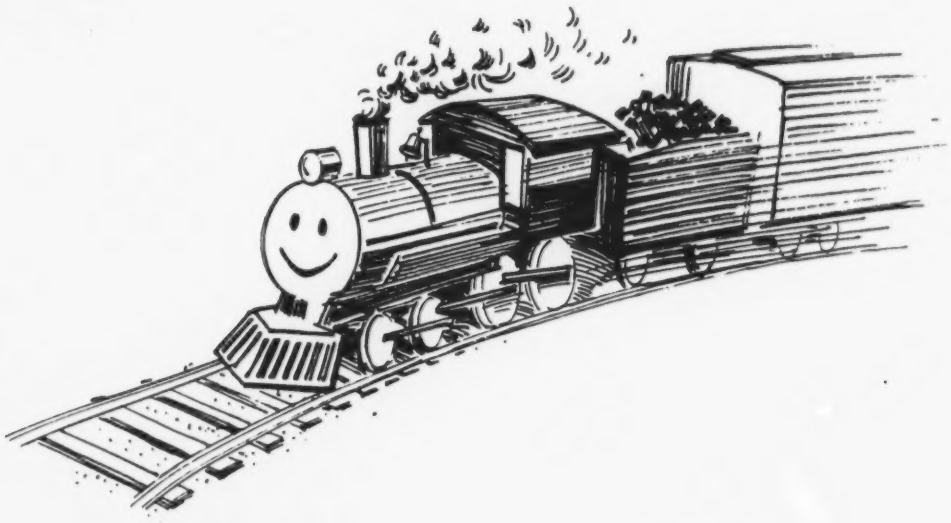
13. **Jeff:** "Okay, Sue, you ask for the extension, and we'll discuss John's concerns next time we meet." ***Mediator, Task-minder***

14. **Sue:** "Great! I think we are really getting somewhere!" ***Inspirer***

Jeff called the meeting to a close, and they all went back to the production line.

On-Track and Off-Track Behaviors

When you work on a task-oriented team, some of the behaviors of the members will keep the focus on solving the problem and completing the task. These actions can be called *on-track* behaviors. Other behaviors could distract the team, taking the focus away from the task at hand. These behaviors can be called *off-track* behaviors.



On-Track Team Behaviors

Skill Builders 2

In the imaginary team meeting below, the members are meeting to choose one of two options in a work-related task. Categorize each comment as either *on-track* or *off-track*, and write your answers in the blank.

Script: ***Possible responses include:***

1. ___*On-track*___ "Let's get this meeting started so that we can get our first assignments."

2. ___*Off-track*___ "Come on, Joe, you know we can't think until we've finished our first pot of coffee and had at least three doughnuts."

3. ___*Off-track*___ "Hey, everybody, tomorrow is Lenora's birthday. I'm taking donations for her gift. Anybody got any ideas what we should get her?"

4. ___*Off-track*___ "Say, I had a birthday last month, and you guys didn't even notice."

5. ___*On-track*___ "Sam, could you summarize the decision choices we came up with in yesterday's meeting?"

6. ___*On-track*___ "Before we vote, could someone recap the high points of each choice?"

7. ___*On-track*___ "Hey, if we end up taking option number one, have you thought about what that will mean to our possibility of getting overtime?"

8. ___*On-track*___ "We already rehashed those ideas yesterday. Today we just need to make our choice and go with that."

9. ___*On-track*___ "I understand that you want to get on with making a decision, so to satisfy both needs, let's limit the recap to five minutes each."

10. ___*Off-track*___ "Hey, before we recap, did anybody watch the game on television last night?"

In the natural flow of teamwork, a shift from *on-track* to *off-track* behavior can be expected. The ideal balance would allow the team to accomplish its goal within the time limit while maintaining team cohesiveness.

Personality Traits of Team Members

Individual strengths and weaknesses will affect the productivity of any team. Each team will assume a different structure due to the personality traits of individual members. What personality traits do you bring to a team? Answer the questions below for yourself.

- Do you like to be told exactly how to achieve a goal, or do you like to figure out how you will achieve it on your own?
- Do you like to speak out openly, or do you like to observe quietly?
- Is it more important to you to be with a harmonious group, or do you prefer a task-focused group in which conflict can arise?

Skill Builders 3

Imagine that you have just been moved to a new work area. Occasionally you will be assigned to work with a special team of co-workers to solve problems and complete tasks. Read the names and personality traits of each member. *Choose the team with which you will work.*

You can use your imagination to develop the described characters in any way that you choose. As you study the blend of team members, ask yourself questions. What traits will help or hinder in reaching the team goal? What personality traits are missing from this team?

Team 1

Chris	**Rafael**	**Verna**
quiet-spoken	takes charge	persuasive
self-motivated	makes decisions	practical
easygoing	positive attitude	independent
organized	energetic	competitive

Team 2

Wayne	**Lane**	**Terry**
insightful	emotional	imaginative
sensitive	outgoing	inspirational
curious	playful	appreciative
shy	humorous	adapts easily

Team 3

Tran	**Paul**	**Leticia**
follower	aggressive	excitable
submissive	adventurous	quick thinker
calm	nontraditional	joker
cautious	challenger	talkative

Which group did you choose to work with? ***Answers will vary.***

Why?_____

_____

_____

Why did you turn the other groups down? ***Answers will vary.***

_____

_____

_____

Closing Thoughts

Team member personality traits plus unconscious role-playing help shape the structure of the group. The movement of the group is then determined by the balance of on-track and off-track behaviors.

Skill Builders 4

You will be assigned to a team. Your team will choose one of the activities to complete. As your team develops, observe the roles and personality traits that surface. Recognize behaviors that are on-task and off-task.

1. Design a commercial for one of your company's products, or design a commercial promoting your company.
2. Design the perfect work area.
3. Design the perfect break area.

Check Yourself

Answers will vary.

1. What team role behaviors do you naturally assume?
2. What off-track behaviors really irritate you?
3. Make a list of your own personality traits that surface in a team situation.

MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Introduction to Team Processes: Lesson 2.4

This lesson focuses on individual differences within teams and the use of team processes which encourage individuals to contribute to a team effort.

Develop Your Understanding

Point out that people think, process, and act on information differently. While their differences may make us uncomfortable, they can make a team more effective. Someone else's strengths will counter our weaknesses and vice-versa.

There are several instruments you may use in class as an exercise in becoming aware of and understanding individual team member differences. Among them are the Meyers-Briggs, the Situational Temperament Sorter (by Dr. George Baker, The University of Texas at Austin), and the Learning Style Inventory. If you have access to them, they can help learners understand how different individuals can work together.

When teaching the different team processes, you may want to post the steps for each process where they can be seen for easy reference.

Skill Builders

Encourage learners to follow the steps of each process precisely, because later they will be asked to do an honest evaluation of each process's strengths and weaknesses.

Rather than allowing learners to choose familiar groups, assign them randomly to new teams. This encourages fresh responses instead of rehashing old group behaviors.

Each team should choose or be assigned a team leader, whose role is to facilitate the following of the process. Stress that team leaders do not split votes or have any delegating or final decision power.

At the end of the lesson, discuss with the teams which process worked best for them and which process each individual liked best. Check to see if any one process was preferred by the class as a whole.

Closure

Emphasize that it is important to use team processes that strive to produce the best decisions.

Lesson 2.4
Introduction to Team Processes

Learning Objectives

To become aware of individual differences within teams
To practice processes which encourage all individuals to contribute to a team effort

Vocabulary

team process—how team members interact with each other; how they solve problems or make decisions

Develop Your Understanding

Introduction

An effective and efficient team should focus not only on *what* they need to do (the task at hand), but also on *how* they do it (the *process* they use to deal with the task). Many teams are unsuccessful because team members may be uncomfortable with each other, because more dominant members tend to direct the team, or because members have not learned to recognize and value the different ways people think and work.

An effective team respects **all** ideas and contributions. No one person should dominate the others. Nor should two or three people dominate the other one or two. It is the responsibility of the whole team, not any one person, to be aware of personality differences and to make sure that all ideas are given equal consideration.

Be careful of two traps: the "taking turns" trap and the "group think" trap. Considering all ideas does not mean that one person's idea should be accepted just because it is her "turn." In "group think," all members of the group begin to think alike and avoid saying things they think will cause

others to disagree. Both traps prevent groups from finding the best solutions to problems.

Open Discussion

When most teams meet to discuss an issue, they usually just sit and start talking. This process can be called *open discussion.* There is usually very little structure. Team members throw out ideas and bounce them around until they decide on the one they like best.

Open discussion is used more often, but it can also be the least effective. The open discussion style is perfectly suited to talkative people with strong personalities and least suited to quieter people. As a result, studies have shown that fewer ideas are considered and often less than the best idea is chosen as a solution. However, if all group members are very comfortable with each other, these poor results may not occur. It all depends on each individual team.

Skill Builders 1

Form one or more groups of four to six people. Two or three other participants will silently observe each group in action.

Each group has five minutes to decide on a name for itself that all members like. The observers should write down what they observe about how the group came to a decision. Afterwards, observers and group members should share their impressions with the class.

Structured Open Discussion

For the exercise in Skill Builders 1, you had a chance to try or observe the open discussion style. Many groups that use this style tend to make a quick decision, without a thorough examination of ideas. Adding some structure to open discussion may help bring more ideas out of the team.

Try these steps:

1. Generate and share ideas.
2. Discuss pros and cons of different ideas.
3. Vote on preferred ideas.

Skill Builders 2

Return to the same groups and observation teams used in Skill Builders 1. Your instructor will select a leader for each group. The leader is responsible for making sure that the three steps outlined above are followed.

Each group has five minutes to choose a symbol that will represent the group, using the three-step structured open discussion approach. Afterwards, participants and observers should share impressions with the class. Compare this experience with the first one. Which did you like better? Why? ***Answers will vary.***

Silent Brainstorming

Other team processes may be more effective in producing better ideas. One technique involves *silent brainstorming.*

1. A group leader gives the group a question to answer or a problem to solve.
2. Each member writes his/her ideas on a piece of paper and passes it to the leader. No names are written with the ideas.
3. The leader reads all ideas aloud.
4. The group discusses each idea as it is read.
5. The group votes to adopt one of the ideas.

Skill Builders 3

Try the silent brainstorming technique in groups to make this decision:

Pretend that a co-worker you all like very much is about to retire. What will you give this co-worker as a token of your appreciation?

Afterwards, discuss your impressions of this technique with the class. How does it compare with open discussion?

Answers will vary.

Silent Brainstorming and Ranking

You can take the silent brainstorming technique one step further by following these steps:

1. A group leader gives the group a question to answer or a problem to solve.
2. Each member writes his/her ideas on a piece of paper and passes it to the leader. No names are written with the ideas.

3. The leader reads all ideas aloud. There is **no** discussion at this point.
4. **All** ideas are written on a board or on a piece of paper copied for the group.
5. The group discusses the positives and negatives of each idea.
6. Without further discussion, each team member *ranks* the ideas from best to worst on a piece of paper and gives it to the group leader.
7. The group leader averages all the rankings. The idea with the highest average ranking is chosen.

Skill Builders 4

The class will need to divide into teams of four people. Make sure that you are on a team with people you do not know very well, if possible. A simple way to do this is to number off around the room counting up to the total number of teams you will need.

Review the steps for each type of team process. Either the instructor or the team may choose a team leader for the exercise. It is the leader's responsibility to ensure that the team follows process steps correctly and stays on task.

Your team will make a series of decisions, using different techniques to arrive at each one.

1. Imagine that you work in a manufacturing company that makes a wide range of consumer products. Lately, your standard line of hand and bath soap has not competed well on the market. Therefore, the company has decided to create a new soap to place on the market. They have asked each of your teams to come up with suggestions for the design and marketing of the soap. You have **30 minutes** to make the following decisions: ***Answers will vary.***

   a. *Use the **silent brainstorming and ranking** method to make this decision:* **type of soap**, such as beauty soap, deodorant soap, heavy-duty soap, or other.

   b. *Use the **silent brainstorming** method to make this decision:* **color of soap**, such as standard white, fresh green, soothing blue, invigorating coral, hot pink, or other.

   c. *Use the **structured open discussion** method to make this decision:* **scented or not**—if so, what scent?

   d. *Use the **open discussion** method to make this decision:* **name of soap**.

2. After the soap lines are decided upon, the teams will need to decide on a marketing plan. For this phase, your group may choose any method *except* the open discussion method. Remember that one purpose of this lesson is to practice other group process styles.

   You have another 30 minutes to complete this phase. For this marketing plan, the following decisions must be made: ***Answers will vary.***

   a. How should it be introduced, e.g., big fanfare or just put it in the stores?

   b. What marketing theme should be used?
      (1) Should it be introduced in one area or nationwide?
      (2) Should it cater to one segment of the population (young, old, male, female) or everyone?

   c. What commercials should be used (TV, magazine, coupons), and what should the commercial be like (really gets you clean, makes you feel wonderful, outdoors back-to-nature, keeps you looking young, etc.)?

   At the end of this phase, each team will present or sell their idea to the rest of the class. Then the class as a whole will vote on the idea they like best in each decision category. The team with the most decisions chosen wins. When you vote, be sure to consider which soap would be more likely to earn money for your company instead of just voting for your own group's idea.

3. After the decision-making exercise and final voting, think about how you felt about the team processes that you used. Consider these questions: ***Answers will vary.***

   a. Which process did I feel most comfortable with and least threatened by?

   b. In which process did my team create the most ideas?

   c. In which process did I create and *contribute* the most ideas?

   d. Did I, in either process, contribute everything I thought of? Why or why not?

   e. In any process, did anyone (including myself) dominate or talk more than anyone else? Were that member's ideas chosen?

   f. In which process were our ideas the best?

   g. In future teams, which process would I like to use and why?

MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: The Problem: Lesson 2.5

The focus of this lesson is to preview the problem-solving process and to examine ways to describe, diagnose, and investigate problems.

Develop Your Understanding

This lesson is presented best if you walk through the material step-by-step with the learners. Facilitate understanding of the concepts through class discussion.

A Strategy for Problem Solving

Point out that most organized problem-solving strategies contain similar steps, although there will be some variations.

Skill Builders 1

Learners' responses should describe the problem using only observable facts.

Skill Builders 2

Encourage learners to apply the four guidelines for setting specific goals.

Skill Builders 3

Learners can complete this exercise while working independently, with a partner, or in a whole class activity. Encourage a variety of responses when diagnosing.

Check Yourself

Learners must describe the problem using only observable facts. Learners will need to develop fictitious dates and numbers to set specific goals. They need to choose the ways that they will gather data to help them diagnose the problem.

Lesson 2.5
The Problem

Learning Objectives

To preview the problem-solving process
To examine ways to describe, diagnose, and investigate problems

One of the most important functions of teams is problem solving. Before a problem can be solved, it must be correctly identified and diagnosed. Many problem-solving efforts fail because not enough time is spent on understanding what the problem is and what has caused it. The remaining lessons in this module will focus on a process for solving problems as a team.

Vocabulary

diagnose—to determine the cause or nature of a problem from studying its symptoms
problem—a matter involving doubt, uncertainty, or difficulty

Develop Your Understanding

A Strategy for Problem Solving

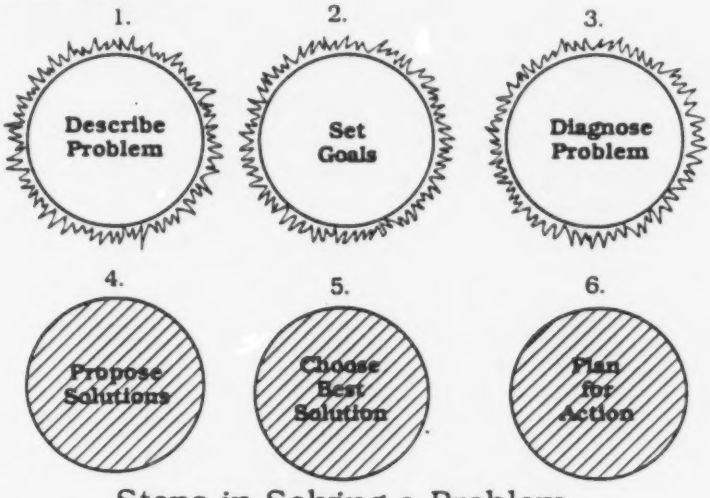
Before you can solve a problem, you must define it. At work, there are many possible problems, such as:

- low productivity
- reduction in market share
- high absenteeism
- failure to communicate
- frequent disagreements
- low job satisfaction
- high accident rate

At some point, you may be asked to work with a team to propose solutions to problems such as these. Your team's success in solving the problem will depend a great deal on whether the process you use to come up with a solution is sound. The following is a recommended strategy for problem-solving:

Steps in Solving a Problem

1. Describe the problem by stating *only observable facts.*
2. Set your goals: What are you trying to achieve by working on the problem?
3. Diagnose the problem.
4. Propose solutions.
5. Choose the best solution.
6. Design a plan for action.



Steps in Solving a Problem

In this lesson, you will practice the first three steps in this process. The remaining steps will be addressed in other lessons.

Describing the Problem

When your team begins to work on a problem, you must agree on a *definition* of the problem. Be very careful at this stage. Avoid jumping to conclusions about what is causing the problem—focus only on what you can observe.

For example, if you turn on a machine and nothing happens, what is the problem? Check the item below that *best* describes the problem:

✔ The machine does not respond when turned on.

____ The machine is broken.

If you checked "The machine is broken," you are jumping to conclusions. Perhaps there is a power failure, the machine is not plugged in, or you didn't flip the switch completely to the "on" position. Only the first response correctly describes the problem.

Skill Builders 1

Read the following passage, and decide how you would describe the problem from your company's point of view.

> Brenda, the supervisor of the Blue Team, has taken a number of days off for personal reasons during the last six months. This leave time was approved by her manager, since her husband is out of work and one of her children is very ill. During the same period, productivity on the Blue Team dropped by 10%.

Describe the problem here:

The problem is that productivity on the Blue Team has dropped by 10% in the last 6 months. There is no way to be sure that Brenda's absence is a cause of this drop.

Setting Goals

When your team sits down to tackle a problem, it is important to know what kind of outcomes you have in mind. Setting realistic, specific goals will increase your chances for successful problem solving. Try not to set vague goals that are hard to measure. Some examples of **vague goals** are:

- Answer the phones faster.
  (How fast? After how many rings?)
- Increase productivity.
  (By what percentage? What is the target date?)
- Improve communication.
  (How? How will you measure if the goal has been achieved?)

Examples of **specific goals** are:

- Always answer the phone *before the fourth ring.*
- Increase productivity *by 5% by the end of the fiscal year.*
- Improve communication *by holding weekly floor meetings.*

When setting goals, keep the following guidelines in mind:

1. Specify ***by when*** the goal will be met.
   This will help you develop an action plan.
2. Use numbers to pin down ***how much*** or ***how many.***
   This will help you evaluate your results.
3. Be sure that the goal is ***measurable.***
   If the goal cannot be measured, you will never be sure you have achieved it.
4. Be sure that the goal is ***realistic.***
   Be ambitious, but don't set yourself up to fail by having unrealistic expectations.

Skill Builders 2

The five goals below are too vague to measure. Your group must rewrite each goal to be both specific and realistic. You can make up your own numbers or use facts that apply to your job. The first one is done for you. ***Answers will vary. Some possibilities:***

Goal 1: Buy more office furniture.

Rewrite: *Buy two 5-drawer filing cabinets and a computer table before September 5, 1993.*

Goal 2: Reduce absenteeism.

Rewrite: ***Hold average individual sick leave under 3 days per each 6 months by January 1994.***

Goal 3: Improve security.

Rewrite: ***Install a new badge-reader system in all plants by March 1993.***

Goal 4: Sell more computers.

Rewrite: ***Increase computer sales by 10,000 in the statewide market for FY 1993.***

Goal 5: Hire more personnel.

Rewrite: ***Hire 6 new operators and 2 quality control inspectors before November 18, 1993.***

Now, check your rewritten goals to confirm that they are specific and realistic. Does each goal have a completion date? Are numbers attached to show how much, how many, etc.? Will you be able to measure whether the goal has been achieved?

Diagnosing a Problem

Most problems have many layers. What is seen on the surface is just the first layer. Sometimes you will have to uncover many layers to find the true cause of a problem.

Before you can begin to diagnose a problem, your group will need to gather data very carefully. Data fall into two categories: tangible and intangible. *Tangible data* is information that can be measured objectively. Examples of tangible data are facts, statistics, and direct observations. *Intangible data* can also be important. Examples of intangible data are feelings, gossip, atmosphere, and expectations. Only after gathering both types of data can you make the best decision.

Ways to Gather Data:

- Consult company reports (financial, sales, quality, etc.).
- Interview those who are closest to the problem.
- Observe the problem in action.
- Brainstorm as a group or individually.
- Conduct experiments.
- Send out questionnaires.
- Invite others in the company to talk to the group about what might be causing the problem.

After you have gathered data, you can begin to analyze the data. Be careful not to jump to conclusions about cause-and-effect relationships. You might begin by forming a theory to explain the cause of a problem. As you receive more information, your theory will probably change. Look at the example below:

Problem: Many of the secretaries at Plink Industries' plant on Industrial Road are coming back late from lunch.

First Diagnosis: *(Theory) The secretaries think that no one will notice if they come back late.*

Additional
Information: All employees were warned to be on time two weeks ago. There has been no noticeable improvement.

Second
Diagnosis: *It's possible that the secretaries are late for reasons beyond their control.*

Additional
Information: There is no lunch room for office workers at the plant. There are no refrigerators or microwave ovens, either.

Third
Diagnosis: *Going out to eat is making the secretaries late. They need to limit themselves to fast-food restaurants.*

Additional
Information: The nearest food available is a 15-minute drive from the plant. This drive can take as long as 30 minutes during the lunch hour.

Fourth
Diagnosis: *If eating facilities are not provided at the plant, the secretaries will continue to be late.*

Notice how the diagnosis of the problem changed as more data became available. It is vital to take the time to diagnose a problem very carefully before trying to find a solution.

Skill Builders 3

Make a new diagnosis after each piece of new information. Your first diagnosis will be more of a guess. ***Answers will vary. Early diagnoses will blame the new employee; later ones will come closer to the real problem.***

Problem: The Green Team at ABC Computers has been written up for four safety violations in the last week. Before that, the Green Team had no safety violations for six months.

First Diagnosis:

Additional Information: A new employee joined the Green Team two weeks ago.

Second Diagnosis:

Additional Information: The new employee was seen several times not using the guard on his machine.

Third Diagnosis:

Additional Information: When the manager called the new employee in and asked why he didn't use the machine guard, he said that no one else used the guards either.

Fourth Diagnosis:

Additional Information: The safety inspector had not observed anyone else on the Green Team not using the machine guard.

Fifth Diagnosis:

Additional Information: Except for the new employee, everyone else on the Green Team knew each other well and had worked together for years.

Sixth Diagnosis:

Additional Information: One investigator talked privately to a senior member of the Green Team and found out that they had worked out a warning system to let them know when a safety inspector was approaching.

Seventh Diagnosis:

This is what really happened: An underground network alerted all of the employees on the Green Team as to when the safety inspector was coming. While they were being observed, all of the employees, with the exception of the new employee, began using required safety procedures. After the

inspection, they did not use the machine guard, nor did they turn their machines off while adjusting them. The new employee was not given any safety instruction. He was told to model his operation of the machine after the other operators. He really did not know he was violating any procedures since he was doing what he saw daily.

Note that diagnosing the problem does not solve it. Your team would now need to research the reasons behind the behavior of the employees on the Green Team.

Check Yourself

Work in small groups to describe the following problem, set goals, and determine causes. You may make up numbers or facts to "fill in the gaps." Do not try to solve the problem.

Gilmore Enterprises is a family-owned company. One of their mottoes is "Nothing is more important to the future of America than the protection and education of our children." The family has given a large sum of money for a "*family support*" project for the employees of Gilmore Enterprises. Two projects have been selected, but only one can be funded. One will provide day care for employees' preschoolers, and the other will pay two-thirds of the college tuition for college-age children of every employee. This positive gesture has caused bickering.

Describe the problem:

Only one of two employee-assistance programs will be funded.

Set goals:

Answers will vary with the group. Some groups might try to please everyone; others might want to find the solution that will benefit the largest number of employees.

Diagnose (determine causes):

Not enough money to fund both; narrow view of the situation; lack of information about alternatives; etc.

MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: The Decision: Lesson 2.6

The focus of this lesson is to have learners practice proposing solutions to a problem, choosing the best solution, and designing a plan for action.

Develop Your Understanding

Proposing Solutions

This step gives learners time to practice previously learned skills: silent brainstorming and using a question checklist. Learners are to apply these skills in proposing workable solutions.

Choosing the Best Solution

This step presents one method (using a rating scale) for choosing the best solution. You may want to mention other methods such as using a prioritizing grid.

Skill Builders 2

Guide learners in developing and using a rating chart.

Designing a Plan for Action

Allow learners freedom in developing a plan for action. Teams may choose to imitate the chart format modeled, or develop their own design.

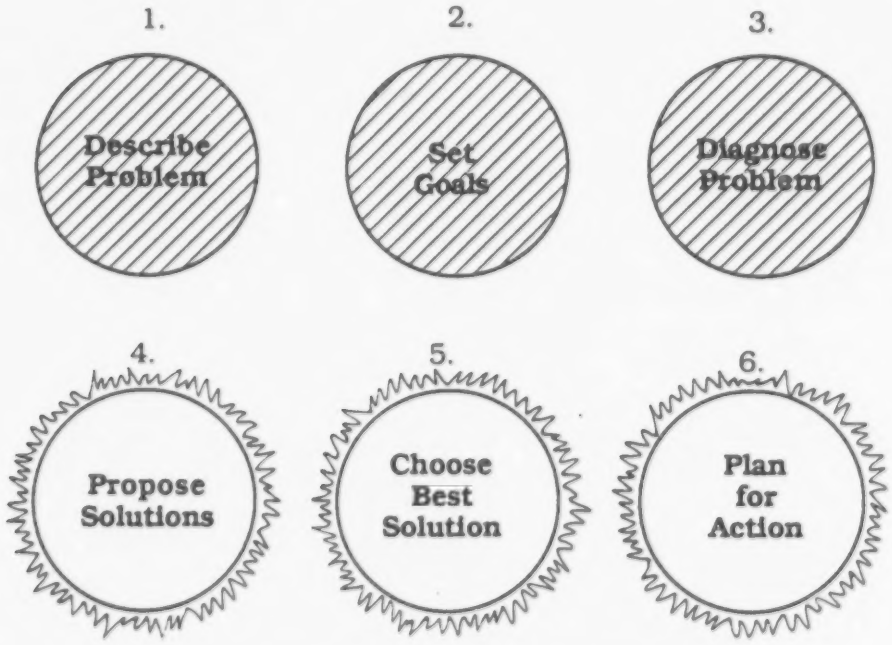
Lesson 2.6
The Decision

Learning Objectives

To practice proposing solutions to a problem
To practice choosing the best solution
To practice designing a plan for action

In the last lesson, you became familiar with the first three steps in solving a problem. This lesson focuses on the last three steps. You will practice proposing solutions to a problem, choosing the best solution, and designing a plan for action.

Develop Your Understanding



Steps in Solving a Problem

Proposing Solutions

A team needs to choose a solution that meets its goal. Before making the final choice, many workable solutions will be considered. Brainstorming and using a question checklist can generate many ideas. Read the case below.

> The Red Team's goal requires a few employees to attend a three-week training class preparing them to use the new computer system. Classes will be held on Tuesday and Thursday for two hours at the start of the shift.
>
> However, every Thursday, the Red Team holds its quality control meeting. Attendance is required and is figured into each employee's annual performance evaluation.
>
> Employees are worried because they cannot be in two places at once.

Each Red Team member was asked to *silently brainstorm* possible solutions to the problem. This allowed everyone to have input in developing a fair solution.

To stimulate thinking, the team leader used a *question checklist.* Team members were asked to respond to each question.

- What would solve the problem?
- What would be a fair solution?
- What would make the problem better?
- How could we eliminate the problem?

Here is a list of the *proposed solutions* that the Red Team made.

1. Hold the classes on Monday and Wednesday.
2. Hold the classes at the end of the shift.
3. Hold quality control meetings on Friday.
4. Excuse class members from quality control meetings.
5. Stop having quality control meetings for 3 weeks.

After the proposed solutions were made, team members evaluated each one and chose the best workable solution.

Skill Builders 1

Read the case below.

> Recently, a new work team has been formed at ABC Company. The new team is made up of transfers from other departments, shifts, and plants. Most team members don't know each other. Some members are resentful about leaving their old positions. Morale is low. Your team's goal is to build morale and develop cohesiveness.

1. Form teams with other students. Each member gets 3 minutes to *silently brainstorm* for solutions to the problem. Use the *question checklist* to stimulate thinking. ***Answers will vary.***

   Question Checklist

   What would improve morale?
   What could be done during work hours?
   What could be done after work hours?
   What wild ideas might help?
   What would make the problem better?

2. Each member writes his or her suggestion on paper. Do not write your name on the paper. . Give your written ideas to the team leader.

3. The team leader will compile all ideas on a chart. The group can discuss the pros and cons of each solution. Ideas that are similar can be combined. Keep all the workable solutions that meet the team's goal.

Choosing the Best Solution

After you have reduced a list of possible solutions to a few workable solutions, you can begin a process of comparison to choose the best one.

Using a chart, you can rate all solutions against your list of *evaluative criteria.* The solution with the highest score should be the best solution.

Read the case below.

> Every year ACME Manufacturing focuses on one special need of the community. After this year's fund drive, employees raised $15,000. Now employees must choose one of two beneficiaries: the humane society or the public libraries. The humane society has not had an increase in budget in 5 years, while the public libraries have been cutting back in book purchases and service hours for 3 years.

To make their choice, employees were given a chart. Individuals scored each solution against the criteria. All individual scores were totaled to choose the beneficiary.

Note that the *rating chart* below has

1. a list of possible solutions written down the left side of the page;
2. separate columns for each criterion;
3. spaces to rate each solution against the list of criteria;
4. spaces to add the total rating score for each solution.

Rate the solutions on a scale from 1-10. Use the criteria to evaluate each solution. 1 = lesser 10 = greater

Rating Chart

	Evaluation Criteria				
Proposed solutions	Urgency of beneficiary	Concern of Community	Benefits over time	Number of beneficiaries	Total Score
Solution 1: Donate fund to the humane society.	10	8	5	10	33
Solution 2: Donate fund to the public libraries.	7	10	10	10	37

As you can see, this employee chose solution 2.

Skill Builders 2

Pretend that you are a self-managing work team. Your team's goal is to choose the best candidate for an additional position on your team.

Read the case below.

> Team responsibility has recently expanded to include operation of Machine X. No one currently on the team has been trained to operate Machine X. The new employee will need to operate this machine, or someone else on the team will operate it while the new employee will take over the old position.

Read these considerations:

1. In-house training for Machine X is available.
2. Your team has worked well together for one year.
3. Your team recently received a production and quality award.
4. A key priority for your team is meeting a new production quota.
5. You want the new team member to fit in smoothly and quickly with other team members.

The final three candidates are:

Candidate 1: Has worked for another company for 10 years and states that he is ready for "something new." Has operated Machine X for 4 years. There is no information available on performance or team experience.

Candidate 2: Works for your company in another area and with another team. Operates Machine X for the team (2 years' experience). This individual is considered an expert on this machine. Wants to transfer to a new area. Performance of their team has varied and been inconsistent.

Candidate 3: Works for your company on another shift. Her team has been a top performer and competes with yours for awards. She has not worked on Machine X nor has she been trained. Needs to transfer to your shift for family reasons.

1. Working in a team, decide what your evaluation criteria for choosing a candidate will be. Complete the rating chart, so that criteria are listed and the chart is completed.
2. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate.

3. Allow each team member to rate the solutions against the criteria. Each member will add the ratings for a total score.
4. All total scores are then compiled by the team leader. The candidate with the highest score gets the new position. After all teams have reached a decision, choices can be shared with the class. ***Answers will vary.***

Rate the solutions on a scale from 1-10. Use the criteria to evaluate each solution.
1 = lesser 10 = greater

Rating Chart

	Evaluation Criteria				
Proposed solutions					Total Score
Solution 1: Candidate #1					
Solution 2: Candidate #2					
Solution 3: Candidate #3					

Designing a Plan for Action

Some solutions require detailed planning to carry out. Efforts need to be coordinated. If you are faced with such a solution, design a plan for action. You can make a chart format like the one below. Each member receives a copy.

Steps	*Person responsible*	*Others to be consulted*	*Date to be completed*	*Progress check meeting date*	*Resources needed*
1. get mgr signature	Mary	John & Tom	5/30	5/1	phone time

Your chart format should include

1. a clear list of all steps;
2. the person or persons responsible for each step;
3. contact persons for each step;

4. the date each step is to be completed;
5. dates of progress check meetings that will deal with any difficulties;
6. a list of all needed resources.

Skill Builders 3

Your team has been given the job of planning a company picnic for 100 employees from your shift. It will be held on Friday, June 5, from 11:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. Only company employees will be there—no family members. The goal is to provide a relaxing reward for beating all production quotas for January through March. Your job is to plan food and beverages for the 100 people. Entertainment is being handled by another area. The menu is limited to soft drinks or juices and easy-to-fix food. Barbeque grills are available. Your budget is $750.00. ***Answers will vary.***

1. Consider these and other questions:

   a. What will you serve?
   b. How will you prepare it?
   c. What additional items will you need?
   d. Who will do what?
   e. When do steps need to be completed?

2. Design a chart that will display your detailed plan for action.

3. After teams have made out their plan of action, they can share with the class. Notice the differences in each team's plan.

Summary

A team is only as good as the decisions it makes and the actions it takes. All workable solutions should be listed. Then all solutions should be evaluated and the best one chosen. Finally, an organized plan of action can be designed to carry out the decision.

MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Negotiation: Lesson 2.7

This lesson focuses on the characteristics of problem-solving negotiation. It encourages negotiators to use communication skills to negotiate effectively.

Develop Your Understanding

Giving More Information

Contrast *I-statements* with *you-statements*. Have learners discuss how they feel when someone uses *you-statements* in an accusing manner. Are they open to listening to such a person?

Read the I-statement examples aloud. Emphasize the repeating phrase or word so that learners can hear the pattern. If learners complain that the formula is too rigid and unrealistic, encourage them to find ways of expressing the same thoughts and feelings in words that sound natural to them.

Point out to learners that sometimes feelings can be expressed by leaving off the word "feeling" and just saying something like: "I'm hurt." Another way of expressing feelings describes behavior, as in the example "I feel like just walking away." Have learners brainstorm other behavioral descriptions of feelings. For instance, sometimes a person might say, "I'm down in the dumps."

Direct learners to state their needs as specifically as they can when possible. Stress the importance of being specific to get what you want.

Getting More Information

Encourage learners to use the terms *say-back* and *reflection* interchangeably. This skill will be addressed again in Lesson 3.2.

Closure

Remind learners that acquiring any new skill can feel unnatural at first. The learner has to consciously, mechanically practice the new skill. We go through this stage when we learn to drive a car, operate tools, and use a computer. Using *I-statements* and *say-backs* may feel uncomfortable at first, but with practice they can become a natural part of our communication.

Lesson 2.7
Negotiation

Learning Objectives

To become familiar with the characteristics of problem-solving negotiation
To practice communication skills used in negotiation

In both today's business environment and home life, there is a growing awareness of the need to collaborate to create better products and services, as well as satisfying relationships. This lesson focuses on some skills needed for better communication and negotiation.

Vocabulary

negotiation—the process used to establish agreement between two or more people who are in a state of conflict. It is used to resolve differences and arrive at compromise.

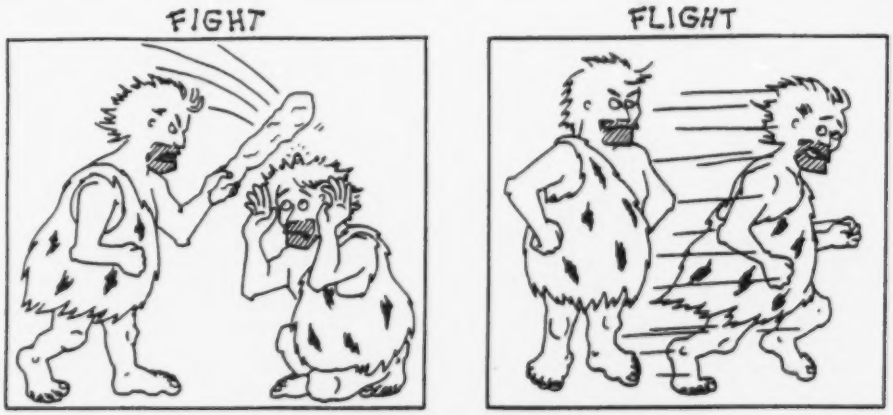
Develop Your Understanding

"Fight or Flight?"

Human beings are interdependent. You need others to survive, and others need you. They have something you need, and you have something they need. It may be goods, services, or emotional support.

We come together to see if we can meet our mutual needs. Because each of us has a different personal history and different goals, conflict occurs. Think of conflict as a certain and natural part of all relationships. Conflict can lead to a stronger relationship, or it can destroy one.

Picture the caveman having a conflict with his neighbor. His "fight" or "flight" response appears. In the one image we see him beating his opponent over the head with a club, and in the other we see him running away.



RESPONSES TO CONFLICT

Modern examples of "fight" are common. We experience out-of-control anger that results in personal attacks that lead to counterattacks. We see the use of manipulation and lying, where winning becomes proving the other wrong or gaining for self-interest only.

Examples of "flight" can be found, too. Witness the person who ends a relationship too quickly, before options can be explored. Recall the person who shrinks from confrontation in a group meeting.

The sad result of these responses to conflict is that possible relationships are cut off or go into a destructive cycle that is replayed again and again. Needs are not met in a satisfactory way for either side. The possibility for future collaboration is harmed.

Now Try These

Case Study: Two work areas are sharing a major contract. Negotiations have resulted in conflict. Categorize their spoken words by writing "fight" or "flight" next to each response listed below.

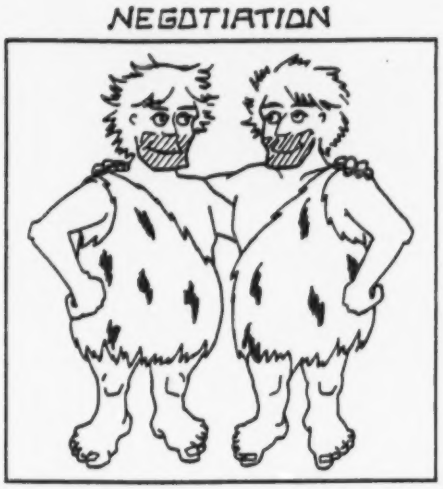
Fight 1. "We demand that you do it the way we've always done it!"
Flight 2. "We don't have the time, but if you insist we'll go along."
Flight 3. Team Leader Z stops talking and withdraws.
Fight 4. "We'll go to the top brass before we'll do what you suggest."
Fight 5. "If your area messes up again this year, we'll lose the contract."

Flight 6. "That isn't what we wanted, but what does it matter?"
Flight 7. "We'll drop the whole contract if you don't agree on this."
Flight 8. "If you say it's true, we trust you. We don't need to look at the data."
Flight 9. "I insist on getting first choice of team members."
Flight 10. "The budget is tight, but you go ahead and order your supplies first."

Blaming, attacking, and withdrawing can be justified at times, but may not get you what you want. Also, there may be people with whom you do not wish to collaborate. You have that right. However, the skills in this lesson are to be used when you choose to negotiate in spite of your differences.

Problem-Solving Negotiation

Is there another response to conflict? Yes, there is a problem-solving approach to conflict. Working side by side, we negotiate our differences to build mutual gains.



THE PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACH TO CONFLICT

Characteristics of Problem-Solving Negotiation

In problem-solving negotiation, participants agree that it is in both of their interests to come to a negotiated settlement. By using clear communication, they work to understand each other.

Now Try These

Yes or No: Write "yes" next to each statement that you think describes problem-solving negotiation behaviors and "no" next to those that do not help negotiation.

Yes 1. Explain your perceptions, emotions, and goals clearly.
No 2. Keep a "hidden agenda" that has the other wondering what you are up to.
Yes 3. Look at conflict as a shared problem that needs to be explored.
Yes 4. See understanding each other as necessary to negotiation.
No 5. When differences arise, see the other person as stupid or lacking in sense.
No 6. Don't confront the person on issues that might make him/her feel hurt or angry.
Yes 7. Work to be honest, sincere, and reliable.
Yes 8. Establish intentions for fairness and trust early in the negotiations.
Yes 9. Stay open to learning more and gaining new perspectives.
No 10. Exaggerate what you can do for the other person.

So how do you build relationships that invite the other person to work toward mutually satisfying goals? You work toward open and honest communication that builds trust and lays the groundwork for further negotiations.

Communication Skills Used in Problem-Solving Negotiation

Suppose that conflict erupts between people who have the desire to meet each others' needs. This could be a red-flag signal to *give and get information!*

Giving More Information

Throughout any negotiation you will need to express your own perceptions, goals, feelings, and expectations. The other person needs information from you if you are to reach an agreement that will be satisfying to you.

I-Statements

Would you want to negotiate with someone who spoke to you like this: "You aren't making any sense. You need to listen. I know what you should do." *You-statements* have a way of creating resistance between negotiators. That's why *I-statements* are one of the best ways to communicate your own thoughts. You speak for yourself and don't fall into the trap of speaking for

the other person. Study the examples below. Can you see how this kind of talk might help communication?

1. ***Bringing up the Issues***
   "I'm puzzled by your comment."
   "I'm not clear about your intentions."
   "I've noticed that you changed the subject."
   "I'm confused by what you did the other day."
2. ***Reaching for Understanding***
   "I want to understand your views."
   "I want to make my point of view clear to you."
   "I want to get to a clear understanding with you."
   "I want your input on this."
3. ***Expressing Your Feelings***
   "I'm feeling misunderstood."
   "I'm feeling frustrated."
   "I feel like just walking away."
   "I feel hopeless about the situation."
4. ***Stating Your Needs***
   (Ask for behaviors or attitudes you want to see in the other person.)
   "I need you to give me more time."
   "I need you to give me an advance warning."
   "I need your assistance next Friday morning."
   "I need your supportive attitude on this project."

Skill Builders 1

Case Study: Paul and John share responsibility for cleaning up the work area at the end of the shift. They had agreed upon a division of duties. However, Paul has noticed that John is not cleaning one of the basins. In the space provided, complete the *I-statements* that have Paul negotiating the problem with John.

Possible answers include:

1. ***Bringing up the Issues***
   I . . . ***"I've noticed that you haven't been cleaning one of the basins lately."***
2. ***Reaching for Understanding***
   I want . . . ***"I want to understand what that's about."***
3. ***Expressing Your Feelings***
   I feel . . . ***"I'm feeling a little confused."***
4. ***Stating Your Needs***
   I need . . . ***"I need you to complete all of the duties on your list."***

Getting More Information

You want the other person to listen and be open to your ideas, but a potential negotiator is going to have a difficult time listening to you if you have not demonstrated that you understand him. He must feel that you are sensitive to his needs and concerns even if you don't agree with him.

Two skills that can improve your understanding are questioning and reflecting skills.

1. Questioning

Asking questions is one of the most important tools for gathering information. You can ask closed-ended questions to get brief responses, and ask open-ended questions when you need detailed responses. Study the examples.

Examples of Closed-Ended Questions

"Is this what you had in mind?"
"Did you need it right away, or can you wait?"
"Am I getting your meaning?"
"Does this goal meet your expectations?"
"Can you live with this schedule?"

Examples of Open-Ended Questions

"What are your objectives?"
"What would you like to resolve today?"
"What is your concern?"
"How are you feeling about this?"
"What are your interests?"
"What do you think we should do?"

Skill Builders 2

1. Pretend that you and a co-worker have just discussed a carpool plan. You are very satisfied with the suggested arrangement, but you want to make sure your co-worker feels the same. Write closed-ended and open-ended questions that you can ask to assure her of your willingness to understand her perspective.

   Possible answers include:
   1. ***"Can you live with this arrangement?"***
   2. ***"Is this what you had in mind?"***
   3. ***"What are your concerns?"***
   4. ***"How can we improve this plan?"***

2. Think of a recent private life or work situation that needs negotiating. Write questions that you can ask the other person to gain understanding.

   Answers will vary.

2. Say-Backs

Another communication skill is called "say-back" or reflection. You say back to the person what she has told you. Don't parrot her exact words, but say back what the person said using your own words. You may reflect the meaning or the emotion of what was said.

Say-Back Sentence Starters That Reflect Meaning

"If I understand you correctly, you are saying that . . . "
"You have made some strong points. Let me see if I can explain them."
"Here's how I understand what you said."
"Are you saying that . . . ?"
"Please correct me if I misunderstood . . ."
"Let me know if I'm getting your point of view. It seems to me . . . "

Say-Back Examples That Reflect Emotion

"It sounds like you are feeling frustrated."
"You sound really disappointed."
"I hear some real tension in your voice. What is that about?"
"You look like you are feeling pleased with the outcome."

Skill Builders 3

1. Working with a partner, choose a current topic of interest. The topic can be about the workplace, the environment, sports, women's and men's issues, or something else.

2. One partner will express his *opinion* about the topic. The other partner listens closely and then reflects back what she understood the speaking partner to have said. When the speaking partner feels he has been satisfactorily understood, the partners reverse roles, and the game starts over.

Skill Builders 4

Reflecting another person's *emotions* is very important towards assuring the other that she is understood by you. Read each piece of dialogue below. Write a say-back that reflects the speaker's emotions.

1. "I'm not going to give in on this point. I've given in on everything else!"

   "You sound like you've been frustrated."

   _____

2. "You might as well take that, too. By the time I catch up with my paperwork, there won't be any need for me to have one."

   "You sound like you're feeling like you'll never catch up."

   _____

3. "Whatever you do, let me continue to run the programs. It's what I live for at work!"

   "You must get a lot of satisfaction from your work."

   _____

Skill Builders 5

Sue and Jane were assigned to work together at one station. At first, everything was going fine between them. Two weeks ago, Jane noticed that Sue started taking frequent and longer breaks than usual.

Sue would ask Jane to watch her equipment while she took a break. Jane was happy to do this in the beginning because she needed Sue to do the same for her at times.

Jane made friendly excuses for Sue's behavior, but by the second week she was starting to build up anger. Jane likes working with Sue, and needs to keep a positive working relationship with her.

Conflict was arising in the relationship. The red flag signaled more information was needed. *What could Jane do to begin a negotiation that would lead to an agreed-upon settlement?*

1. Write *I-statements* that Jane could say to Sue to bring up the issue.
   Possible answers include:

1. ***Bringing up the Issues***
   I . . . ***"I'm puzzled by your more frequent and longer breaks."***
   "I've noticed you've needed more breaks lately."

2. ***Reaching for Understanding***
   I want . . . ***"I want to understand from you why the long breaks are necessary."***
   "I want you to shed some light on this for me."

3. ***Expressing Your Feelings***
   I feel . . . ***"I feel frustrated over being asked to do this."***
   "I feel stressed when I am left to watch the station by myself."

4. ***Stating Your Needs***
   I need . . . ***"I need you to shorten your breaks."***
   "I need you to let me know when you will return from your break."

2. Now write questions that Jane could ask Sue to get the information that will bring understanding.

   "What are the reasons for this?"
   "Are you having some kind of problem?"

3. Brainstorm possible reasons that Sue could give for her behavior. Choose the best one.

Sue's two school-age children have been staying at home without adult supervision. Sue has been using her breaks to call home and check on them.

4. Now have Jane reflect understanding by giving a *say-back*.

"It sounds like you could be under a lot of stress."

Now leave Jane and Sue alone, and let them figure out if they can come to a negotiated settlement.

Check Yourself

Think of a recent private or work situation when using *I-statements* could have improved communications. Write *I-statements* below.

1. ***Bringing up the Issues***
   I . . .
2. ***Reaching for Understanding***
   I want . . .
3. ***Expressing Your Feelings***
   I feel . . .
4. ***Stating Your Needs***
   I need . . .

MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Applying Problem-Solving Skills: Lesson 2.8

This lesson is intended to give learners an opportunity to apply all skills previously covered in Module 2 to a realistic decision-making process. If learners are currently involved in a similar process at work, the real life scenario may be substituted for the hypothetical case given in the lesson.

Read through the entire lesson and determine how much review is needed to prepare learners for this assignment. Review learners on the skills and steps necessary for decision making that will be used in the Skill Builders.

The Situation

If desired, learners may be assigned to new teams to give them a chance to interact with a new group. Appoint a capable team leader for each group or let members choose one. Provide each team with a chalkboard, overhead projector, or easel tablet if available.

You can choose to walk through the process by giving participants verbal explanations of each step, or you can let them be self-directed. Use your discretion. Allow approximately one 2-hour session for completing the lesson. If time limits are preferred for each step in the process, you or the team leader can set them.

Skill Builders 1

3a. Each group can choose the team process or processes it will use for each phase of decision making. Permit teams to combine features of the processes.

b. Teams can choose to make one chart for the group, or to have individual members make their own charts.

e. Ask learners to answer the question: "What information would I need to know to make the best decision?"

f. Point out to the learners that the limited information provided may inhibit their ability to list possible causes.

g. This step is optional.

h. Provide blank paper to participants so that they can draw their rating charts and then turn them in to the team leader.

Skill Builders 2

Teams can present their suggestions for improving attendance and machine operation to the class.

Check Yourself

Learners must apply their understanding of the skills and concepts taught in Lessons 2.1 (Thinking Creatively), 2.3 (Team Building), and 2.7 (Negotiation).

Lesson 2.8
Applying Problem-Solving Skills

Learning Objective

To apply team problem-solving and decision-making skills to a situation

In this module, you have examined a variety of techniques for coming up with creative solutions to problems and for making decisions as a team. In this lesson, you will have a chance to apply your skills as you work together to meet a challenge.

Directions: Your instructor will assign you to a team. Your team must make decisions in response to the situation below. A time limit will be set by your instructor.

The Situation

Ellis Industries is a small company that supplies computer chips to larger manufacturers. The company has about 100 manufacturing employees. Business was slow during the last year, and since the company had invested in a lot of new equipment, it was unable to make a profit. In the past, employees usually received annual raises of 5-10%. This year, the company has announced that such a raise will not be possible. However, management expects business to improve later in the year, so it wants to do something to reward the people in manufacturing. Most of the people in this group worked hard to increase productivity and offset the cost of the new equipment.

Several factors have harmed business. The first is an increase in absenteeism. Managers are concerned that some employees may be abusing sick leave since many employees are out sick one day every month. Another factor is reduced productivity that has been caused by not being familiar with new equipment. While management wants to reward the manufacturing areas, it also expects your team to suggest a strategy for reducing absenteeism and for increasing productivity. The company wants to see some improvement in attendance and productivity within 6 months.

Skill Builders 1

1. You have been assigned to work with a team of several employees. The team is made up of one representative from each manufacturing work group.

2. Your team's task is *to select one of two proposed options for rewarding manufacturing employees*, or to suggest a third option instead.

   If you select Option 1, an across-the-board 2% raise will be given to everyone. If no improvement is seen in absenteeism and productivity in 6 months, the company will begin to lay off its least productive workers.

   If you select Option 2, the best workers will be given a 5% raise, average workers will get no raises, and the least productive workers will be laid off. If no improvement is seen in 6 months, more layoffs may result.

3. Use the following steps to help you come to a decision. Space is provided for your responses.

   a. Choose any of the *team processes* described in Lesson 2.4 to problem-solve and make your decision.

      Choices will vary.

   b. Study the impact of options on all involved parties. You can make a *benefits and concerns chart* like the one shown in Lesson 2.2.

      Answers will vary.

c. *Describe the problem* by stating only observable facts. You can describe the problem in one simple clear statement. See the example in Lesson 2.5.

Answers will vary.

d. Next, *set your goal or goals.* What are you trying to achieve by working on the problem? Lesson 2.5 contains examples.

Answers will vary.

e. If this were an actual problem, you would *gather tangible data* (facts, statistics, and direct observations) *and intangible data* (feelings, gossip, atmosphere, and expectations). What data would you need to help you make the decision? Lesson 2.5 tells you ways to collect data.

Answers will vary.

f. What are the *causes of the problem*? Using the limited information given, list possible causes. Refer back to Lesson 2.5.

Answers will vary.

g. If your team wants to *propose an alternative solution* to the problem, use a question checklist to stimulate thinking. See Lesson 2.6.

Answers will vary.

h. Finally, decide what your *evaluation criteria* will be for making a decision. Rate each proposed solution against each criterion. See the *rating chart* modeled in Lesson 2.6. Individual team member scores can be compiled to make a total rating score for each solution. The option your team chooses will be the one you suggest to management.

Answers will vary.

i. Present your team's decision to the class with an explanation for your choice.

Skill Builders 2

1. Brainstorm all possible ways that employees might be motivated to improve attendance. Be serious or have fun with this. Which suggestions will you present to management?

   Answers will vary.

2. Brainstorm all possible ways to help employees improve operation of the new equipment. What suggestions will you present to management?

   Answers will vary.

3. Could management be motivated to accept your suggestions by developing a plan for action?

Check Yourself

Put a check by each of the following that you observed. ***Answers will vary.***

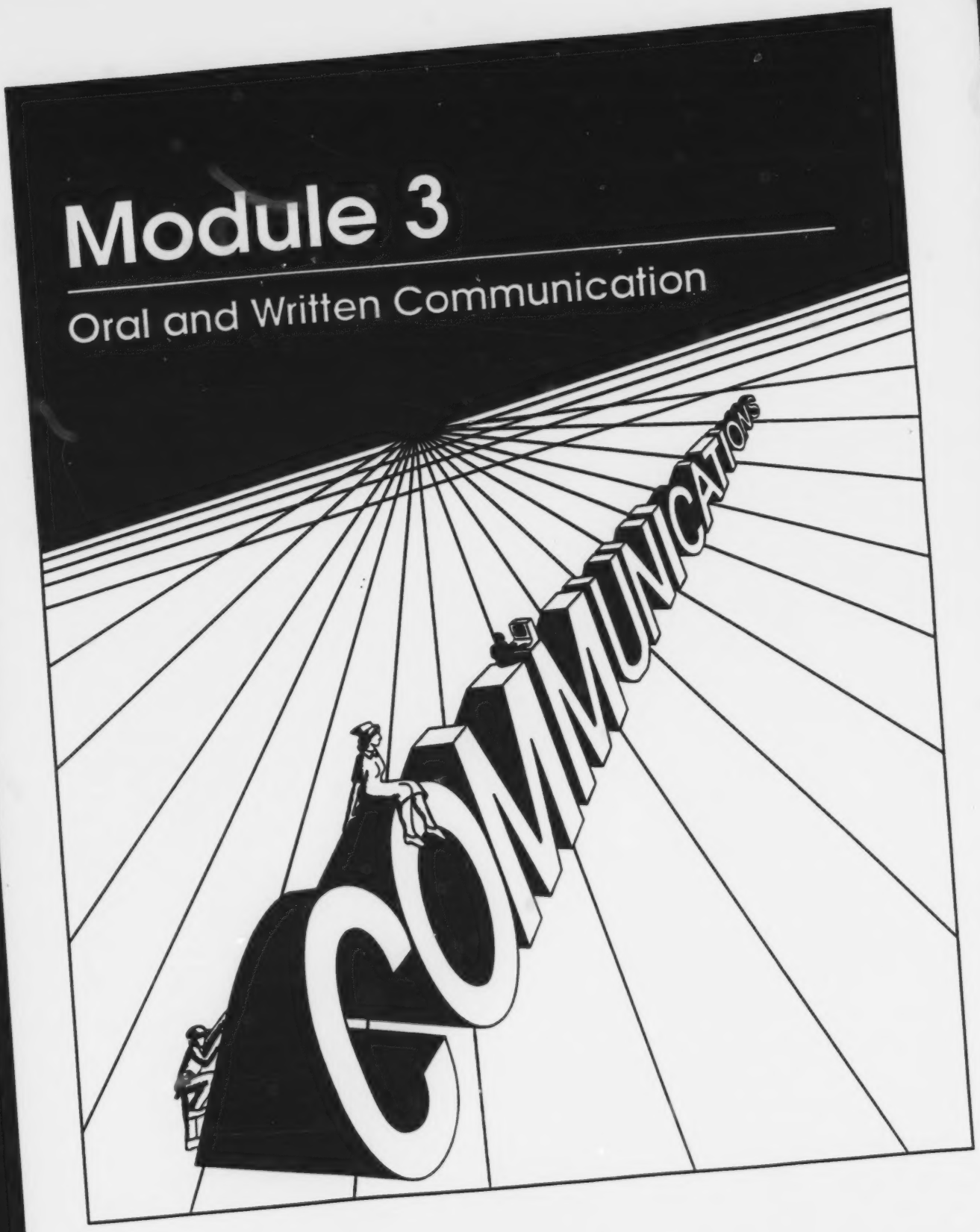
Which of the creativity tools did your team use?
_____ Brainstorming
_____ Question checklist
_____ Visual brainstorming (mapping)

Which of the team behaviors did you observe?
_____ Unassigned role behavior
_____ A balance of *on-track* and *off-track* behaviors
_____ Personality traits that benefited the team

Which of the negotiation skills did you observe?
_____ Giving more information by using *I-statements*
_____ Getting more information by asking questions
_____ Demonstrating listening by making *say-backs*

Module 3

Oral and Written Communication



MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Sending Clear Messages: Lesson 3.1

The focus of this lesson is to develop communication tools for sending clear messages.

Develop Your Understanding

Sending Congruent Messages

The purpose of this practice is to communicate clearly, honestly, directly, and to eliminate confusion. The corrected 3-part messages should be congruent with the honest meaning and feelings of the sender. In these examples, the voice and/or body language contains the honest feelings of the sender. When the message is rewritten, only certain aspects of the 3-part message may need to be modified.

Now Try These

While there is an answer key for this exercise, accept varied responses if learners can support their answers with the information presented on passive and aggressive behaviors.

Skill Builders 3

Adjust the role-playing activity to fit the personalities of the learners. Some learners will enjoy role-playing, while others feel uncomfortable. This exercise works as a whole class or partner activity.

Assertive Messages Formula

Point out that the first step in the formula describes the other person's behavior objectively and specifically. It is not an accusing "you-statement" that attacks or blames. The remaining three steps expand the learner's application of "I-statements."

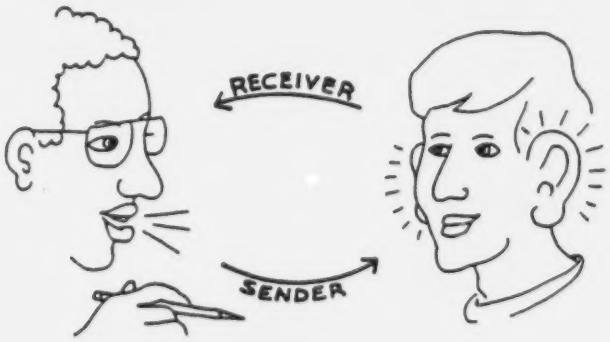
Lesson 3.1
Sending Clear Messages

Learning Objective

To develop tools for sending clear verbal messages

You have probably heard it said that most problems in human relationships are a result of poor communication. The same can often be said of problems between people at work. In this lesson, you will recognize and develop methods for sending clear verbal messages. Mastering these techniques can help you develop positive working relationships.

Develop Your Understanding



In all communication, there is a sender and a receiver. In fact, you play both roles during any interaction. The two roles overlap. You take and give information at the same time. Even if you stop talking, your body language and your voice continue to send messages.

Sending Messages

Think about your day yesterday. How did you spend your time? You probably spent some of your time communicating with someone. Which of the following did you use to convey messages?

1. Words
2. Body language (including facial expressions, eye contact, use of personal space, speed of movement, body positioning)
3. Paralanguage (voice tone, emphasis, and tempo)

Sending Congruent Messages

We place a great deal of importance on the words we say, but body language is also part of the communication process. Your voice completes the meaning of the total message you send.

What is wrong with the communication process in the following situation?

George has just asked Linda to do a favor for him. Linda responds in the following way:

Verbal Message	**Body Message**	**Voice Message**
"Sure, I can do a favor for you. What did you need?"	Linda's chin is tilted up and slightly turned to the side. She looks out of the corners of her eyes.	Her voice sounds controlled and lacks feeling.

Linda's words, body, and voice don't match. She is sending *incongruent messages*. Often, people imagine that their words are the only messages being sent, when to the outside observer the true message is completed by their body language and their voices.

When we send incongruent messages, we are confusing the receiver and making communication difficult for both people. Direct, honest communication is improved by sending congruent messages. Let your body language, voice, and words support the message you want to send.

Sometimes this can mean altering all three messages. For example, suppose Linda had responded this way:

Verbal Message	Body Message	Voice Message
"I'm a little busy right now. Is it something that won't take a lot of time?"	Linda smiles apologetically but looks George directly in the eye.	Her voice is firm but natural.

This time, Linda has communicated her real feelings without making George uncomfortable.

Skill Builders 1

Spot the incongruence in each three-part message below. Rewrite the message descriptions to make the whole message congruent with the speaker's honest feelings. Be sure to communicate feelings without being rude to the listener.

Possible answers include:

1. Verbal Message	**Body Message**	**Voice Message**
"No, you're not interrupting. Come on in."	Ben keeps working. He smiles with a closed mouth.	His voice sounds strained and lacks expression.
Rewrite: **Verbal Message** ***"At the moment I've got a deadline. Come back in thirty minutes and I'll have some time to talk to you."***	**Body Message** ***He makes direct eye contact and gives a relaxed smile.***	**Voice Message** ***His voice is firm but expressive.***

2. Verbal Message	**Body Message**	**Voice Message**
"Oh, me? I'm doing fine."	Jan's face looks longer than usual. Her lips are tight, and her eyes are dull.	Her voice inflection is forced and mechanical sounding.
Rewrite: **Verbal Message**	**Body Message**	**Voice Message**
"Actually, I did not sleep well last night, and I'm having a difficult day."	***Jan looks at her partner, raises her eyebrows, and shrugs her shoulders.***	***She speaks slowly and her voice sounds tired.***
3. Verbal Message	**Body Message**	**Voice Message**
"Sure. I can handle that assignment."	Kate's eyes avoid her listener. Her face looks tense and nervous.	Her voice is hesitant and lacks confidence.
Rewrite: **Verbal Message**	**Body Message**	**Voice Message**
"Right now I'm swamped with work, and it would be difficult for me to tackle that without some help."	***Kate looks as if she is contemplating everything she needs to do.***	***She speaks with an assertive tone.***

Skill Builders 2

Now recall a recent communication you shared with someone in which the other person sent you an incongruent message. Describe the three-part message in the space below.

Verbal Message	Body Message	Voice Message

How did you feel as you received this confusing message? Would a three-part congruent message have increased your understanding?

What message do you think this person really meant to send? Rewrite the message, keeping each part of the message congruent.

Verbal Message	Body Message	Voice Message

Why do people send incongruent messages? Do they do it consciously or unconsciously? They may feel they have good reasons to cover up. Here are some reasons people send incongruent messages. If you think of others, add them to the list.

- To present an image
- To manipulate another
- To get what we want from the other
- To hide our feelings or real thoughts
- To keep from being vulnerable or hurt

Other:_____

_____

Have you ever had an important conversation with someone, only to find yourself asking, "What does he mean?" Where did the truth of his message lie—in his words, body language, or voice? Then there are people who are so skilled at misleading us that we cannot find the truth in any part of their messages.

Increasing your own self-awareness will make you conscious of when you are sending incongruent messages. You can then make a decision to continue the deception or to clear it up.

When others send incongruent messages, point it out to them in nonthreatening ways. ("I see that you are saying you are happy, but your face looks sad. What does that mean?")

With whom and in what situations would you like to improve your ability to send clear, congruent messages? Write your goals below.

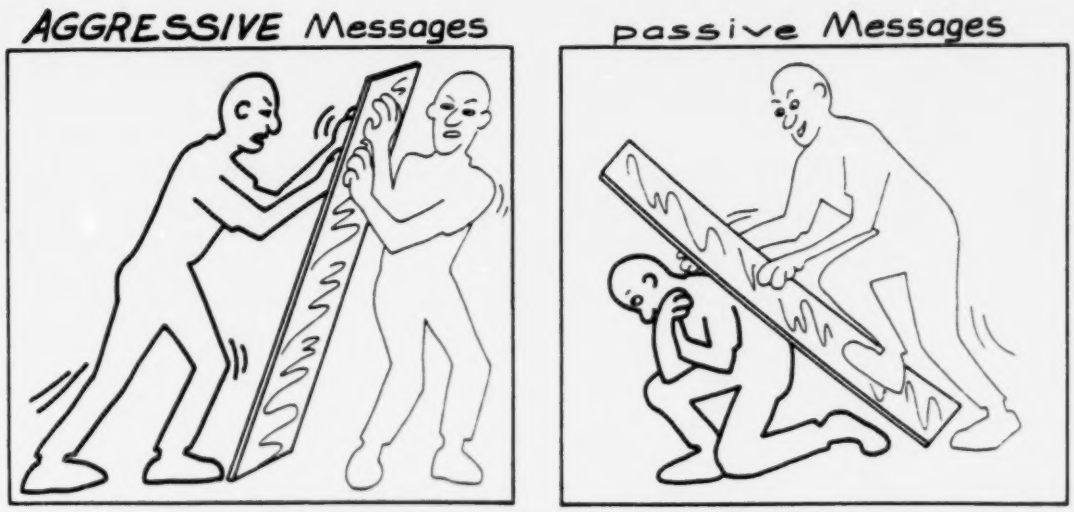
People	*Situations*
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Sending Assertion Messages

Messages sent can be categorized as aggressive, passive, or assertive. There are times when each is an appropriate response to the situation. However, aggressive and passive messages are often destructive and do not honor the person's personal space or boundaries.

Your personal space includes your body, the territory around you, and your property. It also includes your rights, values, and emotional territory. When someone invades your space, that person is violating your boundaries. You have the right to be in control of your life and to protect your boundaries from invaders.

Study the descriptions of aggressive and passive messages given below.



Boundary Violations in Progress

Aggressive Messages:

1. Violate others' rights, personal space, and values.
2. Dominate others.
3. Attack others.
4. Communicate own needs, feelings, and thoughts while ignoring other peoples'.

Passive Messages:

1. Do not protect own rights, personal space, and values.
2. Avoid confrontations.
3. Communicate indirectly.
4. Put others' needs, feelings, and thoughts before own.

Now Try These

Categorize the following as either an aggressive or a passive message. Write in an "A" for aggressive and a "P" for passive.

1. **P** "It really doesn't matter to me what we do. Whatever you want."

2. **A** "I know this isn't my machine, but you should handle it this way."

3. **A** "We're not going, and I don't want to discuss it anymore!"

4. **A** "You slouch. You could fit the hard work you've done on the head of a pin."

5. ___P___ "Let's not fight about it. Everything is okay."

6. ___A___ "I know you said you wanted to buy a used car, but let me tell you why you are going to buy a new one."

7. ___P___ "Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't realize you wanted to sit in this chair. I'll move."

8. ___A___ "Well, you're wrong about that! I'll tell you what the truth is."

Skill Builders 3

You can role-play or discuss the following situations. Act out or describe the words, body language, and voice messages sent by the people in each interaction.

1. *Aggressive Message Situations*

   These messages use selfishness, pressure, disrespect, threats, blaming, name-calling, accusing, or any other aggressive behavior. How would a listener respond to these aggressive messages?

   a. A co-worker pressuring others to switch over to a new way of doing things
   b. A supervisor criticizing an employee for an error
   c. An employee manipulating another employee to take over some of his responsibilities
   d. A shopper returning merchandise to a salesclerk

2. *Passive Message Situations*

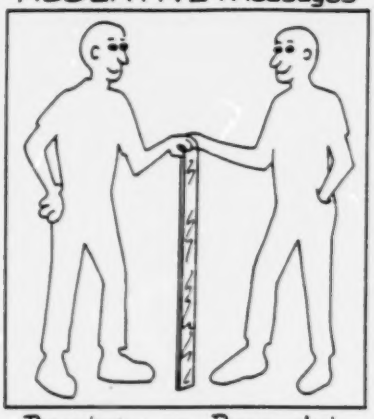
   These messages use self-put-downs, conflict avoidance, indirect communication, and denial of personal needs, or any other passive behavior. How would a listener respond to these passive messages?

   a. A new co-worker who needs to ask for help
   b. An employee who wants to suggest her good idea at a meeting
   c. An employee who has just received an award for outstanding achievement
   d. A friend who is trying to say "no" to a request for borrowing money

Aggressive messages may get you what you want in the short-term, but in the long run you may lose out. People may avoid you or find ways to counterattack either openly or sneakily. You may find yourself isolated. Passive messages may allow you to avoid conflict, but, as your needs go unmet, you may develop depression, physical illness, and unfulfilled

relationships. Sending passive messages frequently keeps you from developing real intimacy. Once again the price is isolation.

ASSERTIVE Messages



Boundaries are Respected

Assertive Messages:

1. Respect the rights, personal space, and values of self and others.
2. Communicate directly about own needs, feelings, and thoughts.
3. Stand up for self even if it means conflict, yet show willingness to negotiate.
4. Do not violate others' needs while meeting own needs.

When you send assertive messages, you are communicating clearly. You do not have a hidden agenda. You are not manipulating. You send messages that are constructive and show respect for yourself and the other person.

Assertive Messages Formula

You may want to choose a formula for sending assertive messages. The formula is used as a guideline. In reality, you will adapt your message to the situation.

Respect your own boundaries and those of the other person. Don't attack or blame when you send your message.

Your assertive message will contain these elements:

1. A description of the other's behavior that you experience as not respecting your needs, wants, or feelings
2. Your feelings about the behavior
3. A specific description of how the behavior affects you
4. A specific description of the new behavior you want

There are times when you may want to omit step four. Some people will resist any attempt at your telling them what they should do to meet your needs. Therefore, you may want to let them recommend a new behavior. Then it will be up to you to let them know if the suggested new behavior meets your needs.

Example 1

1. *When you* didn't tell me that the machine was broken,
2. *I feel* frustrated,
3. *because* my first run failed and I wasted time.
4. *I want* you to let me know when the machine is defective.

Example 2

1. *When you* tell me that you don't have time to talk about the project,
2. *I feel* upset,
3. *because* I have lost a week of valuable time waiting for your input.
4. *I want* you to find time for us to discuss this project within the next two days.

Skill Builders 4

1. Write a four-step assertive message that might fit the following situations.

   a. Ron and David work at the same station, but on different shifts. Ron has the habit of using David's materials and supplies without David's permission. At first, David didn't say anything to Ron about it because he felt he was being petty. Finally, David felt he had put up with it long enough. Pretend you are David, and write a four-step assertive message to Ron. ***Answers will vary. Some possibilities include:***

      (1) *When you...* ***"When you use my materials without asking me,***

      (2) *I feel...* ***I feel irritated,***

      (3) *because...* ***because I waste time looking for and requesting more materials.***

      (4) *I want...* ***I want you to order your own materials instead of using mine."***

b. Kelly and Gloria are co-workers and friends. Gloria likes to drop over at Kelly's workstation to chat during the day. This prevents Kelly from getting her work done on time. Pretend you are Kelly, and write a four-step assertive message to Gloria.

(1) *When you...* ***"When you drop over to talk while I'm working,***

(2) *I feel...* ***I feel frustrated,***

(3) *because...* ***because I get behind and can't make my quota.***

(4) *I want...* ***I want you to save our visits for break time."***

2. Now recall several specific situations in your own life in which you would like to be assertive. If they were in your past, rewrite them as assertive messages. If they haven't taken place yet, practice what you will say.

a. (1) *When you...* ***Answers will vary.***

(2) *I feel...*

(3) *because...*

(4) *I want...*

b. (1) *When you...*

(2) *I feel...*

(3) *because...*

(4) *I want...*

You may get some resistance to your assertive messages. If you do get negative reactions from the other person, stop and do some reflective listening. Then restate your original assertive message. Try not to get sidetracked onto a new issue, but focus on one main issue for the day.

Continue this process until there is agreement on how your needs will be met. After you have agreed on a resolution, plan a time to check back with each other to see if it has been carried out.

Check Yourself

1. Use the following table to record some communications you had this week. Evaluate each part of your message for congruency. Put an "X" in the box if your message was not congruent with the message you wanted to send. Put a check in the box if your message was congruent with the message you wanted to send. ***Answers will vary.***

Date	*Partner*	*Topic*	*Verbal*	*Body*	*Voice*

2. Analyze situations that bring out your aggressive and passive messages.

   With whom are you aggressive?

   When are you aggressive?

   Where are you aggressive?

   With whom are you passive?

   When are you passive?

   Where are you passive?

3. Make a list of your plans to be more assertive.

   Example: I will be more assertive by returning defective items to the stores to get a refund.

MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Listening for Understanding: Lesson 3.2

In this lesson, learners will explore attitudes and skills that enhance listening.

Now Try These

Allow learners to do their own analyses. Opinions may differ.

Attending Skills

Facilitate a class discussion on how learners can tell when someone is only half-listening. How does it make them feel when someone only pretends to listen?

Reflective Skills

Say-backs or reflections were introduced in Lesson 2.7 on negotiation. This lesson continues to develop this skill through modeling and additional practice. Underscore the value of reflections and the need to practice them if they are to be used naturally.

Pointing Out Incongruences

Lesson 3.1 stressed the value of sending congruent messages. This lesson encourages the listener to become aware of incongruences in another's message.

Skill Builders 2

You can pair learners with partners, have them work independently, or perform in a whole class activity. Adjust the activity to fit the personalities of the learners.

When to Use Reflections

The playful exercise in Skill Builders 3 is meant to point out that reflective listening is not always the best choice. Obstacles such as fatigue or prejudice may prevent a person from being able to listen reflectively. Ask learners to think of situations in which reflective listening is an effective tool. When is it not practical to listen reflectively?

Getting Someone to Listen to You

Ask questions to promote learner discussion. "How can you get someone to listen to you?" "How can someone else get you to listen to them?" Share responses.

Lesson 3.2
Listening for Understanding

Learning Objective

To explore attitudes and skills that enhance listening

Of all of the communication skills, listening is the one used the most. Your effectiveness in personal life and in your work depends upon your ability to listen. Improving your listening skills is a lifetime commitment. This lesson focuses on the attitudes and skills for enhancing listening.

Develop Your Understanding

Listening for understanding is an attitude. It is as if the listener were saying, "I really want to understand you, and I'm willing to work at it. For the moment, I choose to set aside my own perspective and to see things from your point of view."

The listener's purpose is to get a clear understanding of the speaker's message. The message is revealed in the speaker's expressions through his eyes, face, voice, emotions, and words. As the listener focuses on the speaker, he can ask himself these questions.

"What message is the speaker trying to send?
"What is he asking for?"
"What message is he actually sending?"
"How does he feel?"

Benefits to the Listener and the Speaker

It's rewarding to listen! It can help you understand a person's motives without having to read his mind. You may avoid misunderstandings.

You can help the speaker clarify his thoughts by inspiring him to find direction. You may allow him to release his emotions or to reassure him. The listener feels good about himself and more comfortable with you.

Listening Obstacles

The biggest obstacle to listening is the listener's judgmental thoughts and responses. Judgment can take many forms. When the listener comes from a judgmental reference point, she inhibits the speaker's sharing of thoughts and feelings.

Now Try These

Read the following judgmental responses.

1. "You should have known the computer couldn't do that."
2. "Why didn't you do this first?"
3. "You shouldn't feel that way."
4. "Oh, quit your bellyaching. You're not hurt."
5. "Well, Bob didn't have any trouble when I trained him. What's your problem?"
6. "Your problem can wait. My favorite TV show is on."
7. "You're wrong. No way! I'll tell you how it is!"

Below is a list of obstacles. Check off each obstacle that you see demonstrated in the responses above.
All of the obstacles can be found in the judgmental responses.

- ✔ comparing unfavorably
- ✔ giving advice
- ✔ disagreeing quickly
- ✔ having to be right
- ✔ discounting emotions or thoughts
- ✔ dismissing needs

When you listen, remain aware of your own tendencies to be judgmental. Stay alert to personal biases, beliefs, interests, and fears that may prevent you from listening for understanding. Suspend judgment until you get all of the information.

Attending Skills

Give your attention to the speaker. You may lean forward, maintain eye contact, use responsive but nondistracting body motions. The speaker can clearly see that you are responsive to her. Attempt to minimize distractions inside of you or outside of you that block understanding. Provide your

speaker with necessary silence for thought. Occasionally, you murmur, "Oh," "Uh-huh," or "Mmmm."

Search for meaning in the speaker's eyes, body language, voice expression, and words. Look for meaning in her total expression. You are attending to her.

How can you recognize when a listener is not attending to you? Sometimes a nonlistener gives the appearance of listening. So how can you tell when a listener is only half-listening? Write your ideas down. Discuss them with the class.

_____

_____

_____

_____

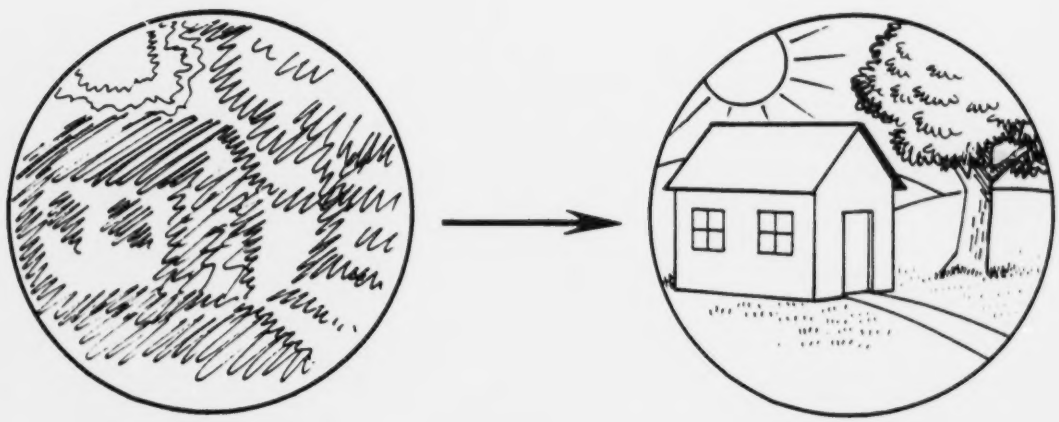
_____

_____

Reflective Skills

The skills that lead to understanding will help you get a clear picture of the speaker's meaning. Anything that inhibits or distracts from the communication will keep the message out-of-focus. Applying skills that enhance listening will get the message into a sharp focus.

Listen Reflectively to Get a Clear Understanding



Out-of-focus **Sharp focus**

To be certain that you are getting a clear image, occasionally check with the speaker to see if you understand his meaning. This is called *reflective listening*. Remember that you are exploring the speaker's experience.

Some of your reflections will be statements, and some will be questions. Either way, you are inviting the speaker to clarify his messages so that he can then make any correction.

Reflecting Content

You can restate in your own words the content of the verbal message. You "say-back" to the sender by giving him your impression of what he just said.

Imagine that a co-worker of yours is telling you about a particularly rough day on the job. Read the possible reflection examples.

Examples:

"Looks like things didn't go well for you today."
"...Trouble with your boss?"
"Are you saying that you will have to do the entire process all over again?"
"In other words, problems snowballed throughout the day."
"So, what happened was, you had a misunderstanding with your boss, and then the process went out of control, and now you must start over."

Reflecting Behavior

Reflect back your descriptions of the sender's body language, voice expression, and action behaviors. You can suggest your own interpretation of the behaviors or you can ask the sender to attach a meaning to the behavior. Try to get in the habit of responding to behavior. Although behavior has many interpretations, with the help of the sender, you can gain insight into its meaning.

Examples:

"I see that you are walking rather slowly today. What's up?"
"I notice that you keep looking toward the door. Is there somewhere you need to go?"
"You've got a grin a mile wide. What are you so happy about?"

Reflecting Emotions

Reflect back the emotions that the sender expresses in her words or behavior. To help you along, you can ask yourself, "How would I feel if I were in her place?"

Examples:

"So, basically you are feeling uncertain about our plans."
"You're feeling resentment about this assignment."
"You look perplexed. Can I clear up the confusion?"
"You feel strong because you were able to complete the training in time."

Skill Builders 1

Categorize the following responses as reflecting **content**, **behavior**, or **emotion**. Write your category in the blank provided.

Content 1. "Do you mean that we will get an increase in our benefits, but our premium will stay the same?"
Behavior 2. "I see that sparkle in your eye. Did you get the promotion?"
Emotion 3. "Sounds like you're dealing with some anxiety about your upcoming review."
Behavior 4. "When I asked you if you were coming, and you took a few seconds to respond, what did that mean?"
Content 5. "Let's see, you want me to record the temperatures over the next 6 hours and then bring the report to your office immediately."
Emotion and Behavior 6. "You keep tapping on the desk with your pen. Are you feeling impatient?"

Pointing Out Incongruences

Don't forget to point out incongruences. When the feelings, words, body language, or voice expression aren't in harmony, you can clear up the confusion by pointing out their incongruences.

Examples:

"You say you want to get home early, *but I see that you just agreed to work overtime.*"
"On the one hand you act kindly, *but your face looks angry.*"
"You say you need to get your sleep, *but then you watched the late show last night.*"
"You say you want to go, *but your voice sounds hesitant.*"

Begin to strengthen your ability to recognize incongruences. You may want to start pointing them out gently. If said in a judgmental way, the sender may perceive the response as an attack and withdraw or react aggressively.

You can follow up with a question.

Examples:

"You say you want this assignment, but you have arrived late for our session several times. *Is there something that is bringing up resistance in you?*"
"You asked to have a computer on your desk, but I haven't seen you using it. *Is it really what you needed?*"

Skill Builders 2

1. Working with a partner, plan a message that you can send. The sender will attempt to send one message, but something in his message will be incongruent. Perhaps this incongruence suggests the sender's true message.

2. One or both of you present the message by acting it out. Let other class members "spot the incongruence."

3. Answering these questions can help you prepare for your skit. What verbal message will you send?

   _____

   _____

   What messages will you send with your body language, voice expression, or behavior?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   What emotions will you send in your message?

   _____

   _____

Why Reflections Are Effective

Reflections are effective because they can be used to do all of the following:

- To decipher unclear messages
- To provide the sender with an instant playback
- To bring real concerns to the surface
- To let the speaker know you are listening
- To acknowledge and accept the sender's emotions
- To use as a memory technique
- To keep the listener from judging
- To shed light on misunderstandings
- To soothe angry and fearful emotions
- To keep the focus on understanding the message
- To check for clarity of the interpretation
- To value the sender's thoughts

If you are new to using reflective listening, expect to feel awkward at first. But, like so many skills, you will pass through the mechanical stage and eventually find yourself using them comfortably.

When to Use Reflections

Using reflections isn't appropriate in every situation. There will be times when you should not try to reflect the speaker. You will learn to make that choice.

Skill Builders 3

Pretend that your name is Dr. Respond. People write you and ask you for communication advice. Read the requests for your professional opinion below. When you think a reflection response is the best choice, tell your client to "Go home, give two reflections, and call me in the morning." But, if you think a reflection is not the best response, be prepared to give your reasons.

Write "yes" if the situation calls for a reflection, and "no" if it does not.

Dear Doctor Respond:

"How should I respond?"

__*Yes*__ 1. "I listened to an expert give a lecture on how I can train my dog to stop biting the mail carrier. I didn't understand a word of it."

__*No*__ 2. "I just returned from 3 months of canoeing down the Amazon River. I haven't eaten or slept in days, but my niece wants me to discuss her wedding plans." ***This person was too tired and depleted to do a good job of reflecting at this time.***

Yes 3. "I'm not sure, but I think my surgeon said he was going to a bachelor party the night before he performs surgery on me."

No 4. "My new neighbor really wants a friend that she can talk to, but every time I look at her I think of my mean cousin, Pearl, who used to make me do all of her chores, her brother's chores, and mine. I didn't get to play with my friends on Saturday for 10 years." ***This person cannot be accepting of the neighbor. She has an obstacle preventing her from listening with understanding.***

No 5. "The other day I asked my 18-month-old baby sister to stop crawling out the bedroom window. She ignored me and did it anyway." ***This baby is too young to benefit from reflective statements. She needs strong direction.***

Yes 6. "My roommate has been making a list of a thousand things about me that irritate her. She's almost ready to kick me out."

Yes 7. "The other day I was talking to myself about my worries over having turned forty. I'm thinking about answering back."

Clarifying Questioning

Where reflections sum up the message you received from the speaker, clarifying questions ask for more information to complete the picture. Questions can be used to gain more information, to shed light, gain specific information, and to obtain elaboration of an idea.

If you don't understand something that the speaker said, you can ask for clarification. If the speaker omitted something you need to know, you can ask for clarification.

Look at the following statements and the clarifying questions asked.

Statement:

"If you want to apply for a shift change or department change, you need to let him know right away."

Clarifying Questions:

"Whom do I need to let know?"

"Exactly when is the deadline?"

"Can anyone apply for a shift change?"

Statement:

"I won't vote for a political candidate who puts out all of this deception."

Clarifying Questions:

"Which candidate do you mean?"

"What do you mean by deception?"

"Why won't you vote for her?"

Statement:

The speaker gives a very sketchy description of an important event.

Clarifying Questions:

"Is there something more you could tell me?"

"I get the feeling that something is missing. Could you elaborate?"

When you ask for clarification, you are asking for the speaker to be specific and to fill in any gaps in your understanding.

Skill Builders 4

What clarification questions might you ask in response to the following situation?

Your boss's supervisor says, "Bring those papers on productivity rates for your area by my office next Tuesday."

Clarifying Questions:

Possible answers include:

Which productivity rates?
What time next Tuesday?
Is there something to be concerned about?

Getting Someone to Listen to You

When you are the speaker, you can ask someone to listen reflectively. For instance, you can say:

Examples:

- "I just want you to listen and then to tell me what you hear me say. Please don't give me your opinion or your advice. I just need to know that you understand me."
- "What do you understand about what I'm saying?"
- "How can I help you to understand what I'm feeling?"
- "How do you see my role in this new team building effort?"

Skill Builders 5

1. You have just discovered a new continent that has been hidden from civilization for 500 years. You are trying to get one of the inhabitants there to do some reflective listening. Luckily, he speaks English! Pick a topic about modern life to tell him about. Ask him to listen and then *say-back* what he understood you to say. Then he should ask clarifying questions to get the meaning of your message.
2. Reverse roles.

Summary

As you ask for clarification, you will find yourself reflecting and questioning over and over again. The speaker will offer any corrections and adjustments. Depending on the length of the communication, this can be a short or a lifetime process.

Once you have laid a base of understanding, then you can proceed in the direction you want your communication to go. However, always come back to reflective listening and clarifying questions as the need arises.

Check Yourself

The next time you are involved in an important communication situation, practice your reflective responses. See how long you can suspend judgment.

MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Dealing with Difficult Situations: Lesson 3.3

In this lesson, learners will develop strategies for dealing with difficult communication situations.

Make it clear to the class that these are possible actions that can be taken in difficult communication situations. There are other difficult situations that may require different responses. Encourage learners to be creative and to problem solve.

By practicing prepared responses, learners can program themselves to deal effectively with difficult communication situations.

Develop Your Understanding

Most of the actions described in this lesson can be categorized as assertive behaviors. They protect the rights and boundaries of both parties. Responses do not need to invalidate the other person to strongly make a point. However, do note that there is a general progression toward stronger actions as the lesson proceeds. Some of the latter actions may be described as aggressive behaviors.

Actions That Deal with Difficult Situations

Each strategy or action is described, and then a model response is given to a hypothetical situation. Next, an application situation is given. The learner is asked to give a response to the situation that would imitate the main features of the model. This lesson can be adapted to whole class, partner, or independent work. Direct learners to imitate the model, but encourage creativity.

Some learners may think the model actions do not sound like real conversation. Ask them, "Well, how could you respond using everyday

language, and still follow the model response?" Get them to experiment with developing responses. Allow for some flexibility in their answers.

Skill Builders 1

Have the whole class brainstorm a list of difficult communication situations that happen in the workplace. Then have learners break into small groups to develop their strategies. Groups can share their strategies with the whole class.

Lesson 3.3
Dealing with Difficult Situations

Learning Objective

To develop strategies for dealing with difficult communication situations

No communication tool kit would be complete without strategies for dealing with problem situations. This lesson will focus on some options that you can use when these occasions arise in the workplace or in private life.

Develop Your Understanding

Using I-statements, questions, and reflections are preferred communication tools. Direct communication is strengthened by sending congruent assertive messages. Better understanding develops through the use of good listening skills.

In reality, these communication skills will not be effective for every occasion. You will need strategies to deal with difficult communication situations.

When you are being attacked, belittled, manipulated, or ignored, what can you do about it? Ask yourself, **"What action can I take?"** Your action can be in your decision, your choice of words, and your use of body language and voice.

Actions That Deal with Difficult Situations

"Put-downs" or "invalidations" take many forms. They are meant to control you overtly (openly) or covertly (sneakily). One of your best defensive tactics is to develop a perspective that does not take these manipulations personally. The invalidator's behavior may be a reflection of his or her own unresolved issues.

By taking action, you are less likely to think of yourself as a victim.

Directions: Read the eleven strategies used for difficult communication situations given below. You are given possible actions you can take in each case. Next, an application will contain a difficult situation. Give an oral or written verbal response that uses the actions.

Answers will vary. Possible responses include:

1. **Agree in Part.** One of the most useful tools you will ever use is to agree with the part of the attacker's message that is true. You may admit that you are wrong or may agree with her goal. This is a tool that builds a base for negotiation. Follow your agreement with your expectations or objections.

   Action: "I was wrong to be late. I see that you are upset, but I don't like being yelled at or called names. I can get your meaning without that."

   Action: "I, too, want this project to get done quickly. Let's see if we can solve this in a way that is agreeable to both of us."

Application: Today one of your co-workers insults you for making one of your rare errors. "You jerk! Your stupid mistake has messed up the whole process. I hope you realize that you've ruined my day!"

How could you agree in part and yet let her know what your objections or expectations are?"

"I apologize for my mistake. You have a right to be angry, however, I don't like to be yelled at or called names. I can understand you without that."

2. **Stick to the Issue.** There will be times when it is best to ignore the emotional content of the message and deal with the concrete issue that focuses on finding a solution.

Action: "Let's take a look at this and see if we can find a solution."

Action: "I can see that we really do have a problem here. What do you recommend to avoid this happening again?"

Application: For ten years, you and another co-worker have been battling your differences of opinion. Teamwork is often hurt. Today you've been assigned to solve a problem in the assembly of a new product.

What can you say or do that would help you both stick to the issue?

"I know that we don't always agree, but I'm willing to put our heads together to solve this problem."

3. **Interrupt the Interrupter.** You can develop tactics for fending off interrupters. Your first choice should be to prevent interruption by making an announcement that lets your listener know what you intend to say. If he breaks in before you are finished, then he is interrupting. Look at the first example below.

Action: I have two important points I need to make, and then I would like to get feedback from you.

Your second choice can be used when the interrupter has already stolen the attention. You state that you still had more to say, and then ask if you can finish your thoughts.

Action: I had one more point I needed to make. May I finish?

Application: You have some concerns about a family member's recent behavior.

What can you say to prevent his interrupting you as you share your thoughts?

"I'd like you to listen to my idea for five minutes, and then I want to get feedback from you."

Application: He interrupts you anyway, and attacks your point of view.

How can you get the focus back on you expressing your concerns?

"Please wait. I still had two minutes left. May I finish?"

4. **Stall for Time**. When someone is trying to pressure you into making a decision, you can take time out. Sometimes it can happen so fast, that you find yourself agreeing with the person's statement even when you haven't had time to reflect on its impact. You can ask for a temporary delay.

   Action: "I really want to give you my best answer. Let me think about this overnight. I don't want to rush my decision."

   Action: "Come back to me in a few minutes after I've given it some thought."

   Application: You are asked to make a tie-breaking vote on a committee. You feel pressured and unsure.

What can you say to stall for time?

"This is an important issue, and since my vote is going to determine the final decision, I would like to think about it overnight before I give my answer."

5. **Repeat Your Position**. Often a person will continue to distract you from your intention, even though you have made your position clear. Instead of responding to her concerns, you can act like a broken record and repeat your position.

   Action: "No, I really don't want to participate in the tournament." After each appeal made by your persuader, repeat your phrase.

Application: You are in the market for a duplex, but your real estate agent keeps insisting that you should be looking into buying a house.

What can you say to repeat your position?

"No, I really don't want to buy a house. I'm only interested in a duplex."

6. **Deter the Dominator**. Because of the need to stay within time limits, to focus on a task, or to allow everyone to contribute ideas, individuals who are monopolizing a discussion may need to be deterred. Study each of the action responses. You can communicate your need by using body language.

   Action: Stop giving encouragement by eliminating eye contact, expressions of attention, or any words of encouragement. If you do make eye contact, give a slightly discouraging look.

   If the dominator continues, take more assertive steps. Be respectful but be firm and persistent. Continue to speak and do not give up the floor, even if the dominator tries to take it back.

   Action: "I know that we would love to hear more about Reba's adventure, but we need to get back to the group task. Now, my understanding is that we have two proposals for our holiday party..."

   Application: Maggie wants to talk about a problem she is having with her next-door neighbor during a team meeting.

As the team leader, what can you say to get the group focused?

"I know we'd all like to find a solution for dealing with a difficult neighbor, but right now we've got to find a solution for making our monthly goal before next month. Let's look at what's been suggested so far..."

7. **Question Nonverbal Attacks**. Rude gestures, dirty looks, and sarcastic smiles are examples of nonverbal attacks. These are difficult to deal with. You can ask the person to put the behavior into words.

   Action: "Could you put that look into words for me?"

Action: "If you don't tell me your meaning directly in words, I have difficulty understanding you."

Application: You've been assigned to be chairperson for a fund-raising project. You are sharing your proposed plan for the event. You notice that one of the members is giving you a sarcastic look.

What could you say to respond to his nonverbal attack?

"I can't quite read your facial expression, but it looks like you have something on your mind. Could you put that look into words for me?"

8. **Confront Withholding.** Maybe the most difficult behaviors to deal with are those that are categorized as "withholding." The invalidator acts in a passive-aggressive manner. You know she is angry and has concerns, but she won't talk about it. You feel uncertain as you try to get some meaning from her vague responses. You've tried questioning, but cannot get direct communication. This person is trying to control you through covert methods. There are two things you can do. *First*, reflect back your interpretation of her behaviors. *Second*, you can choose for yourself, without her input, what you will do.

   Action: "I see by your silence that you are not willing to discuss this now. If you change your mind, let me know. However, I am going to go ahead with my plans."

   Application: After attempting several conversations, you cannot get your friend to respond to your concerns and needs about an important issue. The friend says that there is really nothing more to say.

What can you say to confront her?

"Well, I can tell by your silence that you don't wish to discuss this now. If you change your mind, let me know. However, for now, I am going to have to get on with my own life."

9. **Confront the Attacker Privately or in Public.** If someone frequently attacks you in front of a group, talk to her privately. Reason with her in the beginning. If the negative behavior continues, let her know that the next time she does it you will confront her in the presence of the group. Make good on your word.

   Action: "You are making me look bad in front of the group! Can we handle this in a different way?"

Application: Vincent always waits until a group meeting is called to belittle you. Last week he made fun of your car. This week he attacked your working style.

What can you say in private to confront him?

"Vincent, I've noticed that in the last two meetings you have made fun of my car and my work. I don't like your talking about me like that in front of the group. Please don't do it again, or I will have to confront you in front of the group."

If that doesn't stop him, what can you say publicly to confront him?

"There you go again, giving your personal opinions of me to the group. Can't you think of a more professional way of dealing with this than taking up group time?"

10. **Stand Up to the Attacker.** Confront the person in a way that lets him know you recognize that he is offending you. Use your voice and body language. Tell him you will not put up with the abuse.

    Action: "When you talk to me like that, I'm not motivated to do what you ask."

    Action: Acknowledge with a look that you know what he is doing. Raise your eyebrows. Lean forward.

    Application: While you are using the copier, an impatient co-worker waiting to use the machine says something insulting to you.

What can you do or say to show him you will not put up with the abuse?

Verbal Response: "When you talk like that to me, I'm not moved to do what you want."
Body Language Response: I would raise my eyebrows and give him a look that lets him know that I know he is trying to intimidate me.

11. **Withdraw from a Very Hostile Situation.** If the communication has become hostile, abusive, or violent, withdraw from the situation. You may want to recommend getting back together when dealings can be civil.

    Action: "I won't be talked to that way. I'm leaving. We can schedule this for another day."

    Application: Another employee has been making cutting, abusive remarks to you when she thinks no one else can hear her. In the past, you've tried to ignore her.

What can you do or say to withdraw from the situation?

"I won't be talked to like that. I'm going." (I would walk away, but I would probably let a supervisor or other employee know that I was going to need support to keep it from happening in the future.)

Closing Thoughts

When conflict arises, your first action should be to apply clear direct communication. At other times, you may need to use special strategies. The above actions range from assertive to aggressive behavior. Choose respect, professionalism, and diplomacy as your preferences in communications. Get firmer and tougher when the need arises.

Skill Builders 1

Working in a small group, discuss tactics that you have used to deal with attacking, manipulating, or withholding behaviors. Create new action strategies if you can. Choose two of your action responses to share with the class. Give a name to the strategy, and then describe or give an example of an action response.

Answers will vary.

Name of Strategy_____

Action Response:_____

_____

_____

Name of Strategy_____

Action Response:_____

_____

_____

Check Yourself

Can you use any of the action strategies described? Choose one that you will use and begin applying it this week.

MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Introduction to Writing: Lesson 3.4

This lesson will focus on the way we produce and analyze writing assignments in the workplace, as well as review the format of a business letter.

Begin by creating with the learners a list of types of writing assignments given in the workplace. Ask questions that stimulate learners to analyze and list the tasks involved in developing these written materials. Promote the value of using a programmed or structured approach to completing writing assignments.

Develop Your Understanding

Read aloud and explain the steps involved in the writing process. Then, in Skill Builders 1, take the learners through a guided practice in the use of the "PART" strategy.

Analyze the format of a business letter with the learners, then let them write their own letter in Skill Builders 2. Learners can share their letters by reading them aloud or comparing with a neighbor.

Tools of the Trade

The Comma

This is a supplement which complements any lesson on letter writing. It is appropriate to discuss at any time during the module, because the comma is the major punctuation problem for most learners.

Spelling Tips

This supplement can be introduced at any time during the written communication lesson series. Because the supplement is long, it is recommended that only a few concepts be taught per session.

Lesson 3.4
Introduction to Writing

Learning Objectives

To focus on methods of producing and analyzing writing assignments in the workplace
To review the format of a business letter

This lesson will *introduce* you to the thinking involved for routine writing assignments in the workplace. Most business writing is done in one of three formats: the memo, the informal message, and the business letter. You can learn to write clear, effective messages by using a **programmed** approach to *analyzing* the assignment and *learning a format* for each type.

Develop Your Understanding

The Writing Process

Different words may be used to explain the writing process. However, no matter what words are used, the process involves these steps:

- Analyzing
- Prewriting and planning
- Writing the rough draft
- Rethinking, evaluating, and revising
- Editing and proofreading
- Writing the final draft

Analyzing will help you to write well, even under time pressure. When given a writing assignment by your supervisor or manager, it might be helpful to learn how to "PART" it. This is an acronym that can help you remember the steps for *analyzing* a writing assignment.

P = PURPOSE	What is the purpose in your writing this document? Do you want to convince someone to do something? *Do you want to change someone's opinions?* What response do you want from the person you are addressing?
A = AUDIENCE	To whom or for whom are you writing? Are you writing to managers, co-workers, etc.?
R = ROLE	What is your role in this situation? From what point of view are you writing? Are you an angry employee? Are you appreciative... etc.?
T = TYPE	What type of writing are you told to produce—memos, informal messages, letters of request, etc.?

Skill Builders 1

Read the following assignment, and analyze the task requested. Afterwards, fill out the "**PART**" guide.

Company XYZ has asked each employee to recycle materials used at work. Few employees are actually complying with the request. The janitorial staff brought this to the attention of upper management. As a result, all employees must submit in writing to their supervisors what they will do to help in the recycling effort.

P: PURPOSE

_____

A: AUDIENCE

_____

R: ROLE

_____

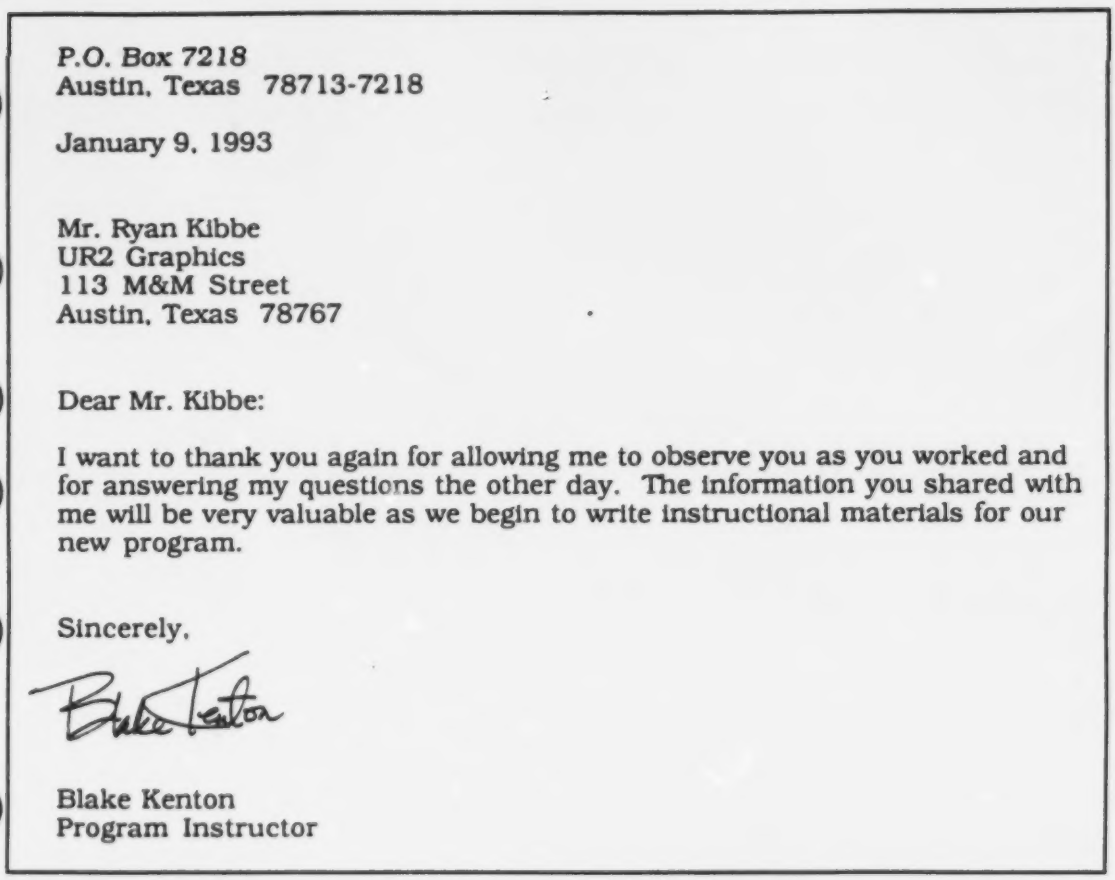
T: TYPE

_____

Business Letter Format

There are many formats for writing a business letter, but the full-block format is the easiest to remember.

The letter below is an example of a full-block letter.



(A)
P.O. Box 7218
Austin, Texas 78713-7218

January 9, 1993

(B)
Mr. Ryan Kibbe
UR2 Graphics
113 M&M Street
Austin, Texas 78767

(C)
Dear Mr. Kibbe:

(D)
I want to thank you again for allowing me to observe you as you worked and for answering my questions the other day. The information you shared with me will be very valuable as we begin to write instructional materials for our new program.

(E)
Sincerely,

Blake Kenton

(F)
Blake Kenton
Program Instructor

The general appearance of this letter is extremely important. The reader forms a first impression of the sender before reading the letter. It should be clear, neat, and concise. When the letter is read, its purpose should be clearly understood.

Mr. Kenton had to treat this letter like any other form of writing. He had to "**PART**" it, to *prewrite, plan, revise, evaluate, edit, proofread,* and then write the final copy. Let's refer to the same letter and analyze the format.

A = the heading, consisting of the writer's address and date
B = the name and address of the person receiving the letter
C = the salutation or the traditional opening of the letter, followed by a colon (:) after the greeting.
D = the body of the letter
E = the closing of the letter
F = the signature

Skill Builders 2

Using the previous format, write a letter addressed to Serene Acres, Clear Cove, Destin, Florida 32541, thanking them for their contribution to the "Stress Management Seminar."

Answers will vary.

MEMO

To: The Instructor
From: The Authors
Subject: Writing Memos: Lesson 3.5

This lesson will provide opportunities for organizing and writing an effective memo.

Develop Your Understanding

Review the "PART" check. After learners have finished writing, check their memos to see if the correct format was followed. Determine if the information is written in a logical order. Encourage learner sharing.

Skill Builders

You will role-play as the learner's boss. The learner needs to ask you for the time, date, and location of the meeting.

The heading of this draft should read:

Memorandum

To: All Operators
From: Lead Operator
Subject: Assertiveness Training
Date: (your choice)

Check the first sentence of each learner's rough draft to see if it contains the main idea.

Tools of the Trade

The Period and Question Mark

This is a supplement which complements any writing lesson. Allow 10 minutes to work on this exercise, and allow learners to check their paper with the correct responses.

Lesson 3.5
Writing Memos

Learning Objective

To practice organizing and writing memos

A memo or memorandum is a short message. In the workplace, memos are a fundamental form of communication. It is important to know the essential facts to write down, and to know the order for those facts. In this lesson, you will practice organizing and writing an effective memo.

Develop Your Understanding

A memo is less formal than a business letter, but more formal than a handwritten message. Mary Dean jotted down some notes and later turned them into a memo.

tel. # - 713-445-2222
meeting - July 23
office - July 27
Humid Inn - Houston
weekend - same #

MEMORANDUM

TO: Sam Carr
FROM: Mary Dean
DATE: July 3, 1992

I will not be here July 23, 1992. I am flying to Houston for a meeting. During the weekend in Houston, I can be reached by phone, (713)445-2222, at the Humid Inn. I'll be back in the office on July 27, 1992.

The memo form has two parts: the **heading** and the **message**. The heading contains: Date, To, From, Subject, or Re:. *The first sentence in the* ***message*** *should state the main idea.* The **message** should be clear, well organized, and to the point.

Study the memo on the preceding page, and answer the following.

Who is the memo from? ***Mary Dean***

What is the main idea of the memo?

Mary Dean will not be here July 23, 1992.

Does the memo tell you why Ms. Dean is going to Houston?

No.

Sometimes memos do not have subjects, etc. The subject is missing from Ms. Dean's memo. What would be an appropriate subject?

Notification of absence

Do a "PART" check on this memo.

You will now practice organizing and writing a memo. Before writing a rough draft of a memo, make notes on the information you wish to communicate in your memo. Using notes will make organizing your memo much easier, and it will help you check to see that your memo includes all the important points.

Use the following notes to write the memo.

Sara's notes to send a memo to Pete:

need 60 lbs. Rocor glue next Tues.
- have shipped UPS
If not possible, notify Tom by Fri.
Urgent 5/4/92

To: *Answers will vary.*

From:

Subject:

Date:

The **message** portion of this memo should explain the subject of the memo in more detail.

What action is Pete expected to take?

Pete is expected to order 60 lb of Rocor glue by next Tuesday and have it shipped by UPS. If this is not possible, he is to notify Tom by Friday.

Evaluate the effectiveness of your memo by:

* Checking accuracy
* Checking the first sentence to see if **main idea** is stated
* Checking for correct spelling of words
* Crossing out any facts that are not necessary

Skill Builders

You are the lead operator in a manufacturing plant. Your boss hands you printed information from a company that does assertiveness training. He wants you to send a memo to all operators that you train, and require them to attend.

This is the information you received:

> The ability to assert yourself is one of the most valuable and necessary talents in business. Sometimes it is just as important to know when to avoid conflict. It is a mistake to think you must counter all opposing views or acts. Successful people know that it is often better to disarm your opponent than to do battle. Our seminars show four ways to communicate your position without seeming pushy or combative.

Read and analyze what is missing to send an effective memo. What questions will you have to go back and ask your boss?

Answers will vary.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Your instructor will answer your questions, as your boss. She will give you the needed information to write an effective memo.

Write a rough draft on the form below:

Memorandum

Date: ***Answers will vary.***

To:

From:

Subject:

Refer back to the checklist, and evaluate the effectiveness of your memo. Afterwards, write the final draft in the space provided on the next page.

Memorandum

Date: ***Answers will vary.***

To:

From:

Subject:

MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Applying for Opportunities: Lesson 3.6

This lesson provides learners practice in applying for opportunities.

Skill Builders 1

Before learners begin to write, you may want them to make lists of specific job titles, job skills, and training experiences that make up their work histories. Encourage learners to highlight their best assets.

Since these letters are very personal reflections of the learners, sensitivity should be used when giving feedback. You should focus first on the content of the letters. Does the letter give an effective picture of the unique value of the employee?

Next, look at the overall organization. Did the letter contain the basic format for a letter of application?

Finally, use your own discernment when offering spelling and grammatical corrections. Some learners may benefit best by only having a minimum of errors corrected. Others may want you to offer very thorough corrections.

Tools of the Trade

Capitalization

This is a supplement which complements any written communication lesson. Present the rules and examples to the whole class, and then allow time for learners to complete the exercises and check their answers.

Lesson 3.6
Applying for Opportunities

Learning Objective

To practice applying for opportunities

Letters of application can be used to **apply** for a job transfer, a shift change, or a promotion. You may also **apply** for school aid, tuition payments, or entrance into an in-house school by using memos or informal messages.

Develop Your Understanding

When you write a letter of application for a job transfer, what is your purpose? You intend to convince the manager of a section or department that you are a valuable asset to the company.

Guidelines for Writing the Letter of Application

In your letter, introduce yourself and tell the reader exactly what you want. Highlight the strong points listed in your resume or application form. Finally, inspire the reader to take action, to make contact with you. Now look at the development of the letter of application.

Appearance of the Letter

In a formal letter of application, use the full-block business format. Accompany your letter with a resume and/or completed application form. Your letter of application should be one page long, free of white-out spots, and written on good-quality stationery that preferably matches your resume. Send this information in a 9" x 12" envelope.

Your letter is the first impression you make on your supervisor. Spelling and grammar need to be correct. Seek professional advice if necessary.

The Salutation

Address your letter to the specific person to whom you are writing (personnel director, supervisor, etc.). Use the person's name and job title.

The First Paragraph

Tell the director or supervisor:

- who you are
- what your current position is in the company
- what position you are applying for

The Second and Third Paragraphs

In the second and third paragraphs, highlight the strong points of your resume or application form. To "sell" yourself, state facts that would be important from the perspective of the person you are writing. Use the following suggestions to spur your thinking:

- Explain how your past experiences will be beneficial.
- State your positive qualifications.
- Offer proof of your skills and abilities.
- Show your knowledge of the organization.
- Show enthusiasm.

The Final Paragraph

In your final paragraph, offer to supply references and added information. This is also the place to urge the supervisor to take immediate action. Tell the supervisor what you want him to do. Ask for an interview, or request a meeting right away. You could say, "When can we get together for a personal interview?"

The Complimentary Close

Your closing should be brief and to the point.

Look at the following example of an in-house application.

8899 Pleasant Drive
Austin, Texas 78723-5656

October 15, 1992

Ms. Anna McReynolds
Personnel Manager
Circuit Electronics
1111 Neon Blvd.
Austin, Texas 78798-1234

Dear Ms. McReynolds:

I would like to apply for the first shift Parts Tester position in the Test and Repair department. I feel I am well qualified for the Parts Tester position for the following reasons.

I am currently an Alignment Machine Operator with ACE department on second shift here at Circuit Electronics. I have trained for, and successfully performed in, three positions here at Circuit Electronics. The variety of experiences I have had give me a broad knowledge about our organization's procedures and goals. Having recently completed the extensive training on quality control, I am clear about the current direction toward which our company is heading.

My interest in the improvements taking place in Test and Repair indicates to me this would be an excellent time to become a member of that team. My ability to learn quickly will make me an asset to the Test and Repair department.

I will be glad to furnish references and provide you with more information about my abilities and performance. When can we get together for a personal interview? I welcome the chance to meet with you.

Sincerely,

Frank Salazar

Frank Salazar

Skill Builders 1

Use the following space to write a letter of application. Pretend that you are asking for a transfer, shift change, or promotion. Use the business letter format and the guidelines for writing an application letter.

Answers will vary.

Writing Memos of Application

You may want to use a memo for something that is less formal than an employment application. Review the guidelines for memos in the previous lesson.

Look at the example below. This employee is applying for an in-house class on stress reduction.

Memo

To: Judy West
Training Department

From: Alice Johnson

Subject: Sign-up for class on stress reduction

Date: December 1, 1992

I am applying to attend the class called "Stress Reduction" being held on December 15, 1992. Please notify me if I am accepted into the class. I can be reached through the bindery mail box, F-14.

Skill Builders 2

Use Nancy Lee's notes to apply for a training workshop. Write your memo on the form provided.

workshop title is "Creativity on the Job"
workshop is scheduled for March 23, 1992
send to Ricardo Canales, Training Dept.
notify me by calling 321-6666, ext. 257
notify me by March 1

Memo

To: ***Answers will vary.***

From: _____

Subject: _____

Date: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Making Applications through Informal Messages

There will be times when you need to communicate with someone, and there will be no specific form to use. You will need to make up your own format and include dates, times, addresses, telephone numbers, and other important information. Look at the example below.

7/18/92

Willie,

I understand you are managing Probe Area's soccer team for this fall. I want to play on the team this year. Could you please let me know if there is still room on the roster? You can call me at home (280-5678) or leave a message on my answering machine at work (345-6789).

Joe Harris

Skill Builders 3

Write an informal message to your work station leader, applying for this year's position as social director in charge of planning all social events for your work area.

Answers will vary.

Check Yourself

Make a list of some things you might apply for in a given year. You can use the following categories.

Work-Related *Personal Finances* *Memberships* *Classes*

Optional

Choose one of the projects you listed above, and write an application letter below:

MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Writing to Request: Lesson 3.7

In this lesson, learners will apply techniques for writing effective request letters, memos, and informal messages.

Develop Your Understanding

The learner is presented with the rules for writing effective requests. In each Skill Builders section, the learner will incorporate the correct format, key points, and organization for writing requests. You may want to provide an example of a good request and a bad request before beginning. Have learners share their writing.

Learners will also be asked to correct poorly written requests. It is a good idea to have them read their corrected versions aloud to compare results. They may have very different versions depending on how hard each poorly written request is to understand. Discuss any differences, and talk about what makes them more or less clear.

Tools of the Trade

Run-On Sentences and Sentence Fragments

This supplement can be introduced at any time during the written communication lesson series. Present the concepts and examples, then let learners complete the exercises and check their answers.

Lesson 3.7
Writing to Request

Learning Objective

To practice techniques for writing effective requests

There are many times at work when you need to **request** something from someone else. This **request** may be to a supplier, or a co-worker, or some other department in your workplace. It is wise to have a well-planned approach, in order to write your requests effectively. The suggestions in this lesson should be helpful.

Develop Your Understanding

Whether your request is in a letter, informal note, memo, or other format, there are several key rules to keep in mind.

1. Be straightforward, and use simple words.
2. State your request early in the letter.
3. Give solid reasons to support your request.
4. Use positive and polite language.
5. Be organized.

Letters of Request

A well-written letter of request should follow the standard format for a business letter. After the appropriate heading, the letter should contain an introduction, body, and conclusion. Also, letters of request should follow the rules listed above.

Skill Builders 1

a. Write a short letter to take care of the following problem. In writing your letter, consider the points stated below. Your manager has asked that you write a letter to ABC Supply Company. In it, you are to request a refund for 200 sheets of copper that were damaged in shipment. Each sheet costs $50.00. They were received on May 9, 1992, under Purchase Order #107J. The copper will be returned immediately in a separate package.

Points to consider: ***Answers will vary.***

1. What is the major request that you will make?

2. Why are you making this request? (supporting reasons)

3. What important information should also be included?

Considering the points above, write the letter of request. You may make up appropriate headings and closings. ***Answers will vary.***

Now check your letter. Did you use simple, straightforward language? Were you polite and positive? Make any needed changes.

b. With the rules for effective letters of request in mind, change the following letter so that it meets those criteria. You will need to reorganize it so that it addresses the issues stated. You may make up any relevant information that should be included. You should also change the language so that it is positive, polite, and somewhat formal.

XYZ Company
123 Street
Billings, Montana 60241

May 10, 19--

ABC Company
789 Avenue
Lompoc, California 53102

Dear Sirs,

I can't believe you were so sloppy in your packing of the machine plugs that we ordered! All 300 were bent and twisted. You have got to be kidding! How are we supposed to use this junk?!? Just answer me that! You had better return our money right now! We paid for them when we ordered them. And I had better see a check in the mail pronto! They cost about $5.00 each and then you charged us tax, too. And your tax rate is another thing. Aren't we supposed to get a discount? I don't call 12% tax a discount! Now do you?! If so, you're crazy! And another thing, do you think maybe you could get them here in under a year next time? I mean three months shipping time is a joke. What are we supposed to do in the meantime? Play tiddly-winks? Let's get it in gear, right?!

Sincerely yours,

Mad in Montana

Rewrite the letter below: ***Answers will vary.***

Request Memos

Memos are usually written in a formal manner, but are shorter than letters. They are often used between employees within a business or organization. They are useful when you need to send the same request to more than one person and for keeping a copy of the request. They should follow the same rules as used for letters of request.

Skill Builders 2

a. In the space provided, write a request memo that fits the following situation. (The heading is already set up for you.) Before you start, fill in the points to consider.

Problem: Your manager has asked you to contact all of the quality team leaders for your area. He needs them to bring the error and scrap rates for the last month to a meeting to be held next Friday at the start of your shift. It will be in Conference Room 203. He also wants ideas on how each team can improve upon their error and scrap rates.

Points to Consider: ***Answers will vary.***

1. What is the main reason(s) or request(s) for writing the memo?

2. What key information or instructions must be included?

3. How should it be organized?

MEMO

Date:

To: All Area Quality Team Leaders
From:
Subject: Quality Meeting

Answers will vary.

After you have written the memo, read over it and make sure it is clear, to the point, and says what you want it to. Did you use simple, straightforward words? Are the directions clear and easy to follow?

b. Read over the following memo. Rewrite it to make it simple, straightforward, and easy to understand.

> Memo
>
> Date: June 5, 1992
> To: All Area Team Leaders
> From: Mr. Green
> RE: Budget Meeting
>
> Last month we spent 15% more money than we did the month before. I need to see your budgets for this month. We did spend less money than the same time last year and we did buy that new machinery. I should probably also see your budgets for last month. How much will it cost you to train your people on the new machinery? We need to have a meeting. Also, it would be interesting to see your budget forecasts for next month. I will be out of town next week but we should meet before then to get this done. My son has a ballgame that I have to be at (I'm cooking the hot dogs afterwards). That is on Tuesday. Why don't we try to meet on Wednesday? Whenever you get to work, come on by.

Rewrite: ***Answers will vary.***

After you have rewritten your memos, compare your new memos with the old ones to see if the new have similar requests to the old.

Informal Requests

An informal request is usually an appeal request for action or information from a co-worker. It is written in an informal style and can be used to communicate between shifts or different areas, etc. Even though it is informal, you should still follow rules for effective requests. The point behind any communication is to be effective and efficient. The same rules apply for informal messages as for letters and memos. Remember to state your request early and use simple, straightforward language. You should be positive and polite in your wording. A typical informal message would be as follows:

> December 3, 1992
>
> Fran,
>
> I need to borrow your keys to the supply cabinet. I left mine at home. Please leave them in the top right-hand drawer so I can get them tomorrow.
>
> Thanks,
>
> Tom

Skill Builders 3

Write an informal request in the space provided to address the following issue.

You need to compile a report for your manager by the end of this week about shift output on Job ABC. You need to get the number of items completed on each shift for this job. You also need to know the error rate for each shift. Susan and Mike are your contacts on the other two shifts. ***Answers will vary.***

Check back over your informal message. Does it make the request early, and do you supply needed information in an organized and straightforward manner? Is it easy to read and understand?

MEMO

TO: The Instructor
FROM: The Authors
SUBJECT: Writing to Return or Show Concern: Lesson 3.8

In this lesson, the learner will produce a letter, memo, or an informal message expressing various concerns in the workplace.

Note: Learners should be able to organize their ideas, as well as use all appropriate punctuation.

Develop Your Understanding

Stress that a letter of concern should answer the same four questions as a letter of return. Take time to review those questions.

Skill Builders 1 and 2 and Check Yourself

Allow enough time for all writing assignments. You need to check each learner's work before going to the next assignment.

Tools of the Trade

The Apostrophe

This supplement can be introduced at any time during the written communication lesson series. Go over the uses and the examples, then let learners complete the exercises and check their answers.

Lesson 3.8
Writing to Return or Show Concern

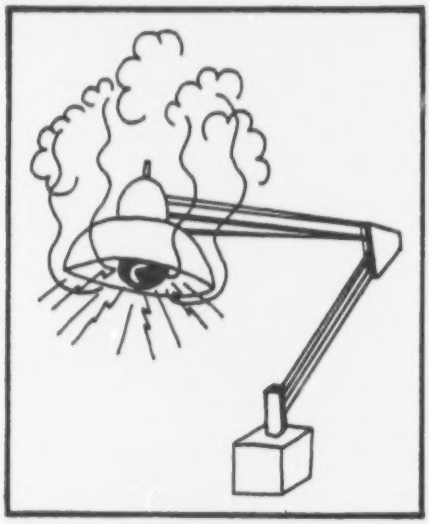
Learning Objective

To practice writing a letter, memo, or an informal message expressing various workplace concerns and/or making returns

Sometimes you will need to create some form of document to return a defective part, machine, etc., or to voice in writing a complaint or concern. As you have learned in previous lessons, many of these writing assignments use a *programmed* approach. In this lesson, the emphasis will be placed on how to fill in the body of a writing assignment dealing with the above topics.

Develop Your Understanding

There are times when you may be asked to return an item, or to correct a mistake. On the next page is an example of a letter that might accompany a faulty lamp being returned to the factory.



May 1, 1992

Dear Corporate Stock Service Manager:

I am returning this lamp because it does not work correctly. Whenever I turn it on, the socket smolders and the bulb explodes. I have enclosed a copy of the invoice showing the purchase price and cost of shipping to total $234.12. Please send our division a full refund, or a new lamp.

Sincerely,

Sandra Fish

Sandra Fish

Stock Supervisor-Division G

You can see that this letter is brief and to the point. Sandra told the corporate manager four things:

- Why she is returning the lamp
- What happens when she uses it
- What else is included in the package
- What she wants done

As long as Ms. Fish is communicating with someone within the same company, this same information could be sent in memo form as follows:

Memorandum

TO: Corporate Manager

FROM: Sandra Fish-Division G

SUBJECT: Faulty lamp

DATE: May 1, 1992

I am returning a defective lamp, and attached on the back of this memo will be a copy of the invoice plus shipping cost. Please send our division a new lamp, or credit our account the full refund.

An informal message would not be appropriate to accompany this defective lamp. Why?

Skill Builders 1

Your company ordered a case of gummed labels from Lloyd's Labels, 451 Kemble Street, Lenox, Massachusetts 01240. They arrived water-damaged and stuck together. Write a letter to accompany the labels you are returning.
Answers will vary.

Put your letter in memo form:

Memorandum

DATE:
TO:
FROM:
RE:

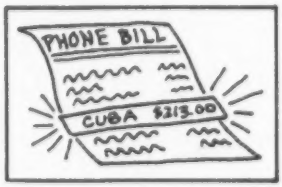
Answers will vary.

Skill Builders 2

Everybody makes mistakes. Once in a while you may need to correct a problem that happened while you were working. You may need to give written documentation that a mistake was made.

Using the following scenario, select a proper way to document your concern.

Your supervisor just received the phone bill for your line. It shows a $213.00 call to Cuba. Even though you did not make the call, your phone log number is on the bill. Use the space provided to *document* the mistake in a **letter memo** and an **informal message**.



Memorandum

Date: *Answers will vary.*

To:

From:

Subject:

Informal Message

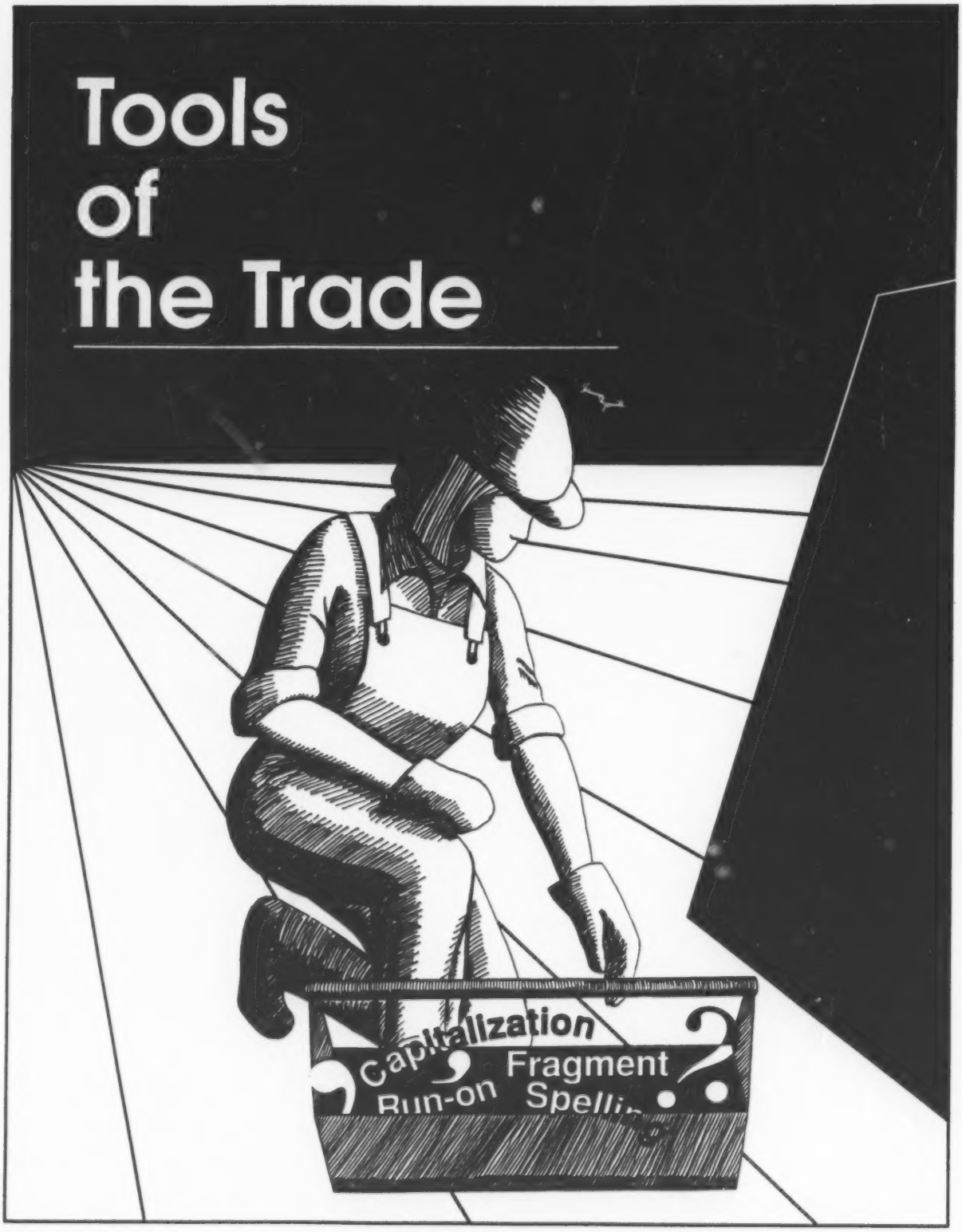
Answers will vary.

Check Yourself

Your company newsletter has a "Letters to the Editor" section. You recently served on a committee that is recommending that cafeteria hours be expanded to include second and third shifts. You were selected to write a letter to the editor explaining your group's decision. Use the space below to write your letter.

Answers will vary.

Tools of the Trade



The Comma

There are many rules for the correct use of the comma, but we will focus on the ones most often used in letter writing.

All of us will have to write letters—personal letters to our friends and relatives, and business letters to conduct the affairs of daily living. Commas are usually found in key areas of letters.

Commas are used:

1. to set off the name of a state from a city;
2. between items in a series;
3. after the salutation in a friendly letter;
4. after the closing in a friendly letter;
5. to set off a noun of direct address;
6. to separate day from year in dates;
7. before a conjunction such as "and" or "but" when it joins two sentences.

A. Following the rules above, insert commas in the proper places in these sentences.

   1. I live in Austin, Texas.
   2. The computers will be shipped to Minot, North Dakota.
   3. He will need pliers, a wrench, and some glue.
   4. We had peas, carrots, potatoes, and roast for lunch.
   5. Sue, please get the file on XYZ Company.
   6. Harry, I need the report by Friday.
   7. I tried to meet her plane, but I was late.
   8. They arrived on December 23, 1992.

B. Read the following letter. Insert commas. Be prepared to explain why you inserted the comma.

June 11 1992

Dear John

We are pleased that you wish to attend the workshop on Team Building in Denver Colorado. The workshop will begin on July 5 1992. Please bring your paper pen and manual. It is important that you read the manual before you arrive.

John we look forward to working with you. I know that your skills will increase greatly as a result of joining our workshop.

Sincerely

Greg Collins

The Period and the Question Mark

One important skill in writing is using the period and the question mark. If you are leaving a message for your manager, you would want to use proper punctuation. Review the rules for the comma, and then review the following:

1. Use a period at the end of a declarative (statement) sentence.
2. Use a period at the end of an imperative (command) sentence.
3. Use a period after an abbreviated word.
4. Put a question mark at the end of an interrogative (questioning) sentence.

Evaluation: Decide whether a period or a question mark is needed in the following sentences, and match it with one or more of the rules above.

3, 1 a. Mr Jacks called to say that he would not be able to attend the meeting

2 b. Call him back as soon as you can

4 c. What should I do about notifying the others

1 d. I will begin on the monthly report today

If we did not have punctuation, written material would look like the following:

> To be effective at your job ⊙ it is important to get along with your supervisor and manager ⊙ To show you want to be cooperative ⊙ accept your share of the work ⊙ and perform your job to the best of your ability ⊙ Ask questions when you do not understand ⊙

Correct the above passage by filling in the proper punctuation.

Capitalization will be addressed in the next lesson. Notice, the first word in a sentence is *always* capitalized.

Capitalization

When writing letters, you will want to use the correct rules for capitalization. The list below reviews rules that are commonly used in writing business letters. Capitals signal to the reader the beginnings of sentences and the names of specific things.

Rules of Capitalization

Capitalize:

1. The first word in a sentence.

2. Proper nouns including the names of a specific person, place, thing, or group of people. *(Sue Hart, Main Street, Travis County Courthouse, the Bill of Rights, Texans)*

3. The first word of a letter's salutation and complimentary close. *(Dear Jane Doe, Sincerely yours)*

4. The first word and all important words in the titles of books, articles, films, television programs, reports and the like, except for articles (a, an, the), prepositions, and conjunctions. *(Reader's Digest, The Old Man and the Sea)*

5. The names of specific geographical locations. *(Barcelona, Colorado River)*

6. North, south, east, west only when referring to a specific region. *(North Africa, West Coast, the Midwest)*

7. The complete names of particular companies and organizations. *(General Motors, the Peace Corps)*

8. Titles of people with their names, but not their offices alone. Within individual companies, often titles and offices are capitalized. *(Loretta Pena, Personnel Director)*

9. Days, holidays, and months. *(Wednesday, New Year's Day, July)*

10. Initials and abbreviations of proper nouns. *(J. B. Fletcher, NBC)*

11. The pronoun "I."

Exercises

Correct the capitalization errors in the following sentences.

1. R. D. Ryan, the Director of Personnel at Circuit Electronics, wrote a report entitled "The Expanding Role of Personnel Services."
2. Larry will travel down the Amazon River in South America during the month of August.
3. Reading Gone with the Wind made me want to visit the South.

Read the following letter. Make any capitalization corrections.

225 Ocean Drive
Bayview, Florida 12345

March 12, 1993

Mr. Bob White
Shipping and Receiving Manager
678 Perch Drive
Circuit Electronics
Austin, Texas 23456

Dear Mr. White:

I am delighted to accept your offer for the position of Assistant Shipping Manager for Circuit Electronics. I appreciate your recognition of my abilities and how they can contribute to your company.

My wife, Maria, and I will be moving to Texas, and I will be ready to start September 1.

Sincerely,

Andrew Martin

Spelling Tips

Are there reasons that many English words are difficult to spell? Yes! Look at these facts.

1. There are 26 letters in the English language.
2. Dictionaries list about 50 different sounds that those 26 letters can make.
3. Dictionaries list about 250 different spellings for those 50 different sounds.

Becoming a better speller means that you realize and accept that there are different ways of spelling the sounds of the English language.

For example, students learn to spell the "sh" in special, then find the same sound spelled differently in initial. They think it is unfair. Somebody must have changed the rules on them!

What can you do to become a better speller?

In this lesson, you will focus on actions that improve your spelling.

1. See-it, Say-it, Write-it

If you want to learn to spell a word, you need to use all of your learning pathways to memorize the word.

- Look at the word. Close your eyes, and visualize it.
- Say and spell the word aloud several times.
- Write the word until the spelling comes easily.

By doing this, you are creating a memory imprint that will help you recall the correct spelling of the word.

2. Count the Number of Syllables

Dividing the words into syllables can help you pronounce and spell the word. Long words are made up of several syllables. For every syllable there is only one vowel sound.

In each word below, highlight or underline every vowel sound. Beside each word, write the number of syllables that you find in each word. Then say the word aloud, breaking it up into syllable sounds.

1. trust ___*one*___

2. lemon ___*two*___

3. modify ___*three*___

4. liberty ___*three*___

5. reach ___*one*___ *(ea makes one vowel sound)*

6. procedure ___*three*___ *(the final e is silent)*

3. Learn Word Parts

Another approach that helps many people expand their vocabulary spelling list is to learn the meanings of word parts. A word is made up of a root or base word. Some words have a prefix at the beginning of the word and/or a suffix at the end of the word.

Here are some example word parts.

Word Roots

graph (write)—graphics, autograph, biography
photo (light)—photograph, photosynthesis
scop (see)—microscope, telescope
rupt (break)—erupt, disrupt, corrupt

Prefixes

auto- (self)—automatic, automobile
bi- (two)—bimonthly, bicycle
pre- (before)—precede, premonition
sub- (under)—submit, submarine

Suffixes

-ation (process)—creation, lamination
-ide (chemical)—peroxide, fluoride
-ology (study of)—criminology, geology
-phobia (fear)—aquaphobia, numerophobia

4. Learn Spelling Rules

Rule 1. Here is a memory device that you can use when spelling the ie/ei pattern.

"I" before "e" except after "c,"
or when rhyming with "a"
as in "neighbor" and "weigh."

Study these ie/ei combinations.

I before E	After C	Rhyming with A	Exceptions
achieve	ceiling	eight	either
review	receipt	weigh	height
yield	receive	weight	weird

Rule 2. Here are rules that you can use when adding suffixes to root words that end in a silent -e.

a. Drop the silent -e when adding a suffix that begins in a vowel (a, e, i, o, u).

Examples: Root Word + Vowel Suffix

accumulate + ing = accumulating
advise + ory = advisory
procedure + al = procedural

b. Keep the silent -e when adding a suffix that begins in a consonant.

Examples: Root Word + Consonant Suffix

approximate + ly = approximately
complete + ness = completeness
measure + ment = measurement

Of course, there are exceptions to the rule, which require your attention.

Examples of Exceptions to the Rules

acknowledgment
argument
ninth
noticeable
truly

Rule 3. Here are rules that you can use when adding suffixes to root words that end in -y.

a. When the final -y comes after a vowel, keep the y when adding a suffix.

Examples: Root Word + Suffix

attorney +s = attorneys
annoy + ed = annoyed
pulley + s = pulleys

b. When the final -y comes after a consonant, change the y to i before adding the suffix.

Examples: Root Word + Suffix

quantity + es = quantities
busy + ness = business
duty + es = duties

c. When adding the -ing to verbs ending in -y, do not change the y.

Examples: Root Word + Suffix

copy + ing = copying
study + ing = studying

5. Study Confusing Soundalike Words

Here are some words that sound similar to each other, but have different meanings. By learning their different uses, you can choose the correct word for the meaning of the sentence. Study their uses below.

accept, except	I can *accept* all of your recommendations *except* for the last one.
affect, effect	The *effects* of the sun's rays will *affect* his vision.
personal, personnel	She went to the *personnel* office to discuss a *personal* matter.

6. Learn Word Families

Study the word families below. Notice how their spellings change.

analyze, analyzing, analysis, analyst
assemble, assembling, assembly, assembler
specify, specifying, specific, specification

Spelling Practice

1. Fill in the correct ie/ei combinations in the blanks below to spell the words correctly.

ach i e ve	w e i gh
y i e ld	w e i ght
rec e i pt	e i ther
rec e i ve	w e i rd

2. Add the root words and their suffixes to spell the words below correctly.

procedure + al = ___*procedural*___
measure + ment = ___*measurement*___
attorney + s = ___*attorneys*___
quantity + es = ___*quantities*___
copy + ing = ___*copying*___

3. Your teacher will say several spelling words aloud to you, and you can practice spelling them correctly.

Check Yourself

More Words for Study. Look at the words below. Practice seeing, saying, and writing the words.

circuit	malfunction	component	technical
conduit	monitor	digital	electronic
conveyor	resistor	frequency	hazardous
current	adapter	modem	transferring
electrical	carrier	routing	defective
employee	occupation	procedure	procedural
gauge	maintenance	resistance	diagnosis
temperature	tolerance	cylinder	conversion

Run-On Sentences and Sentence Fragments

A complete sentence must have at least one subject and one verb. Common errors involve sentences that do not have at least one subject and one verb, which are called *sentence fragments*. Another common error is found in *run-on sentences*, which have two sentences, with two subjects and two verbs, written as one sentence. Both of these types of errors should be corrected.

Sentence Fragments

Example

I am tired and sleepy at work lately. All of the time.

The example has a *sentence fragment* in the second section. Fragments can be corrected by:

(1) adding them to another complete sentence, or
(2) turning them into a new sentence by adding a subject and verb.

It could be rewritten:

"I am tired and sleepy at work lately. It seems to be happening all of the time."

Run-on Sentences

Example

A large number of students would like to be engineers they are good at math and science.

This example is a *run-on sentence*. It can be corrected by:

(1) breaking it into two sentences, or
(2) connecting the two sentences with a joining word like "and," "or," "but", etc.

The sentence could be rewritten:

"A large number of students would like to be engineers. They are good at math and science."

Exercises

Label the following as being either fragments (**F**) or run-ons (**R**).

__R__ 1. The company lost the contract, the workers were upset.
__R__ 2. We lowered our insurance claims last year the premiums increased this year.
__F__ 3. I enjoy working in the drills section. Especially second shift.
__F__ 4. I like working overtime before vacation. More money!

In the space below, correct the previous examples using either of the two rules given for each type of error.

5. ***The company lost the contract, and the workers were upset.***
The company lost the contract. The workers were upset.
The workers were upset because the company lost the contract.

6. ***We lowered our insurance claims last year, but the premiums increased this year.***
We lowered our insurance claims last year. The premiums increased this year.

7. ***I enjoy working in the drills section, especially on second shift.***
I enjoy working in the drills section. I especially like (working) second shift.

8. ***I like working overtime before vacation because it gives me more money!***
I like working overtime before vacation. More money helps!

Read the following memo. It contains several sentence fragments and run-ons. Rewrite the incorrect sentences in the space below.

MEMO

Date: June 1, 1992

Subject: Meeting

To: All Employees Area A

From: Quality Team Leader

It has come to my attention that there has been an increase in scrap levels for our area this needs to be addressed immediately. Meeting this week. Lower levels. It is critical for every team member to be there bring your quality control sheets from the last four weeks. Must review. We will meet in Conference Room 102G on Wednesday, June 8th at the beginning of the shift the area manager will also be there. Reserve this time and plan to attend!

It has come to my attention that there has been an increase in scrap levels for our area. This needs to be addressed immediately. There will be a meeting this week to discuss ways to reduce scrap to lower levels. It is critical for every team member to be there. Bring your quality control sheets from the last four weeks. I must review them. We will meet in Conference Room 102G on Wednesday, June 8th at the beginning of the shift. The area manager will be there. Reserve this time and plan to attend!

The Apostrophe

On this worksheet, you will review and practice using the apostrophe.

1. Contractions—an apostrophe is used to signal that letters have been omitted when two words are combined.

   Examples:

   I'm = I am
   can't = can not
   shouldn't = should not
   they're = they are
   it's = it is

2. Possessive nouns (not ending in "s")—add an apostrophe plus an "s" to show possession.

   Examples:

   men—men's
   Larry—Larry's
   supervisor—supervisor's

   For plurals ending in "s," add only an apostrophe, as in boys' locker.

Special Warning: Do not add an apostrophe to the possessive form of a personal pronoun such as hers, his, yours. These words are already possessive.

Circle each apostrophe in the following sentences. In the spaces below the sentences, explain why each apostrophe is or is not used correctly. Next, circle and explain any word that needs an apostrophe.

1. Sometimes I wonder whether he'll be able to do work as good as her's.

   he'll is correct—this is the contraction of* he will, *and the apostrophe shows the missing letters. her's is incorrect—the possessive pronoun hers does not need an apostrophe because it is already possessive.

2. I cant believe that he's going to run Joes machine.

   cant is incorrect—the contraction should be can't, showing that letters have been omitted from* cannot. *he's is correct—this is the contraction of* he is *(not a possessive), and the apostrophe shows letter omission. Joes is incorrect—an apostrophe needs to be added to show possession—Joe's machine.

3. I think it's time for us to go.

it's is correct—this is the contraction of* it is, *and the apostrophe shows the letter omission.

4. It's not my fault he lost the telephone log.

it's is correct—this is the contraction of* it is, *and the apostrophe shows the letter omission.

5. Joan was appreciative of Harry's proposal.

Harry's is correct—an apostrophe is needed to show possession.